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SUBWAY. D-350.

Mesa/Boogie has unveiled the Subway D-350, a compact but powerful unit that the Gibson-owned company says is the lightest, smallest and most affordable bass amp it's ever produced. Given that the Subway D-350 weighs just over 1.3kg, and measures at just over 7cm high and under 23cm wide, we have no reason to quarrel with any of those claims, lofty as they seem.

Small as it is though, the amp packs quite a punch, with 350 watts of Class D power. It's built with a solid-state preamp coupled with a lightweight Class D power amp and switch-mode power supply.

Mesa/Boogie also fit plenty of controls onto that tiny frame, gracing the Subway D-350 with a four-band (Bass, Low Mid, High Mid, Treble) Baxandall EQ, separate Gain and Master Volume controls, Active/Passive and Input Mute switches, and a Bright switch, for adding some top-end sparkle.

The amp is also outfitted with a built-in fixed high-pass filter, and a Variable Voicing control, which adjusts the amp's response from a flatter curve to a more vintage-voiced curve. 'Round the back, meanwhile, you'll find Aux Input and headphone output jacks, a USB power port, two speakON jacks – for connecting to one or two speaker cabinets – and a balanced XLR direct output with pre/post EQ source, ground lift and Mic/Line level switches. Australian details on this tiny amp that could are still forthcoming.

words by Jackson Maxwell

PIXIES ANNOUNCE FIRST STUDIO ALBUM IN THREE YEARS

Pixies have officially announced Doggerel, their first studio LP in three years. Due September 30 via BMG, the 12-track effort will be the alt-rock titans' first album since 2019's Beneath the Eyrie, and has been described as a "mature yet visceral record of gruesome folk, ballroom pop and brutal rock".

First single There's a Moon On fits more comfortably into the rock camp, calling upon an anthemic collection of electric guitars that delivers both double-note bends and moody open chord strums. A pair of quick-fire guitar solos emphasise this, courtesy of some infectious phrases and selective licks.

According to the band, Doggerel will showcase Pixies' evolution as songwriters, with guitarist Joey Santiago reflecting, "This time around we have grown. We no longer have under two-minute songs. We have little breaks, more conventional arrangements but still our twists in there." Vocalist Charles Thompson – aka Black Francis – concurred: "We're trying to do things that are very big and bold and orchestrated. The punky stuff, I really like playing it but you just cannot artificially create that shit.

"There's another way to do this," he added. "There's other things we can do with this extra special energy that we're encountering."

Words by Matt Owen

THE MARS VOLTA RETURN WITH THEIR FIRST NEW MUSIC IN A DECADE

The Mars Volta – the beloved prog-rock band led by vocalist Cedric Bixler-Zavala and electric guitar hero Omar Rodríguez-López – have released a new song, Blacklight Shine. Accompanied by a short film, directed by López, Blacklight Shine is the first new music from the band since their breakup in 2012.

The song is a thrilling cocktail of sounds, with Rodríguez-López setting the mood with some light, wah-driven rhythm work at the outset. The colorful, six-string psych-funk soundscape he paints drives the song, which Bixler-Zavala says aims to capture the feeling of "a wave of rolling blackouts washing memories onto shore," and "a heartbeat that still remembers everything."

Though the new song is the first major activity from the Mars Volta in a decade, Bixler-Zavala and Rodríguez-López have worked together extensively in the intervening years, playing with Flea in the alt-rock supergroup Antemasque and reuniting with their original band, At the Drive-In.

In tandem with the release of Blacklight Shine, the Mars Volta also announced a North American tour – also their first in a decade. Hopefully an Aussie tour will follow.

Words by Jackson Maxwell

AUSTRALIAN guitar™

#149

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Little Mark IV Combo

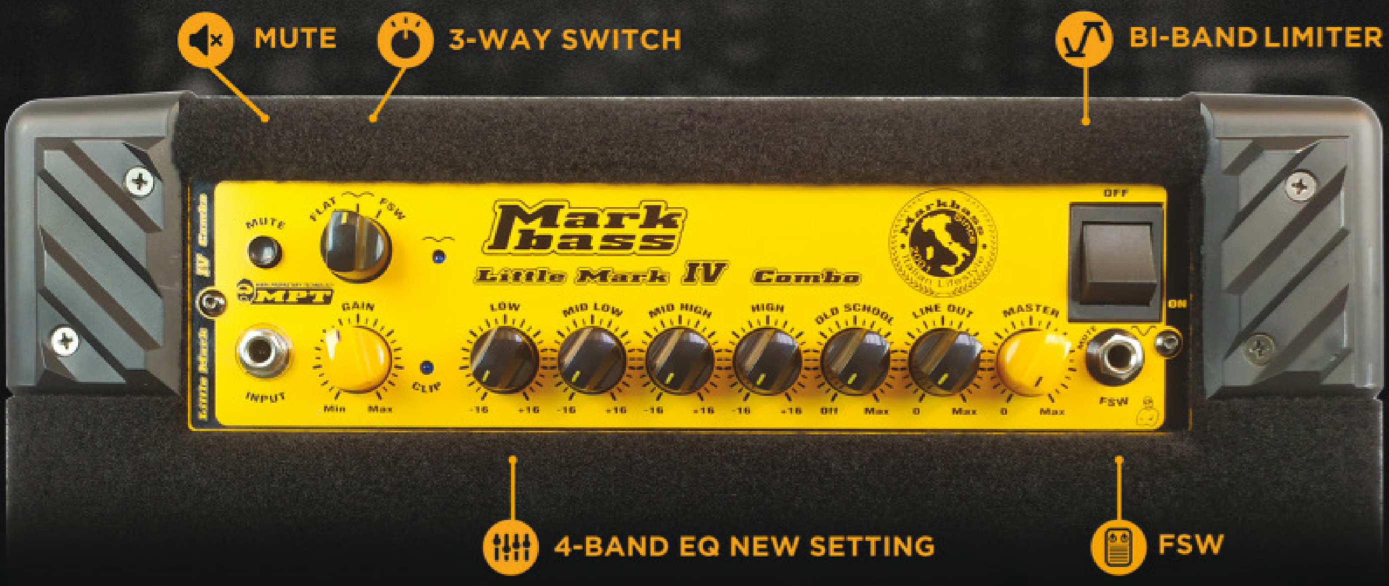

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Photo: Liam Davidson

ALEX MANHIRE

HAILS FROM KAURNA/ADELAIDE, SA
PLAYS IN THE BEAUTIFUL MONUMENT
SOUNDS LIKE SYNTH-SOAKED MELODICORE
LATEST DROP *I'M THE REAPER* (LP OUT NOW VIA GREYSCALE)

What's your current go-to guitar?
My current go-to guitar is a Fender Jim Root signature Telecaster. I love that it's a traditional Telecaster shape but has a modern twist with active humbuckers. I bought it second-hand, it was one of those Facebook group finds and it's been a real workhorse for me. It's super straightforward, and sounds great for the style that The Beautiful Monument play, so… Can't go wrong!

How did you initially fall in love with the instrument?
The first reason I started playing guitar was because my friend had one when I was really young. He taught me 'Smoke On The Water' and I wanted one for myself. It wasn't until later on, when I was in my teens, that I really picked it up. I was obsessed with Paramore – shocker, I know – and started teaching myself their songs by watching YouTube play-throughs. I still have the off-brand electric guitar I learnt everything on; it's an obnoxious red Strat covered in band stickers and the stickers I'd pull off the albums I'd buy at JB Hi-Fi when I was like 16.

What inspires you as a player?
I think coming from more of a metal and hardcore background, I love a good groovy, heavy riff, and I love to add a bit of bounce to some of our "straighter" riffs when I play them live. I just try to play hard and with as much energy as possible live, but I'm a serial soft noodler when I'm just jamming.

Are you much of a gear nerd?
I run a purely digital rig live now, but I am a sucker for pedals. I own very few now but I still have a note saved in my phone full of all the pedals I would love to own – I think the list is like 20 long. I know it's probably super basic but I love a good delay pedal. I still rock the Strymon blueSky from time to time, and I'm still after a JAM Pedals Delay Llama that I will one day pull the pin on.

Do you have any 'white whales'?
A few years ago I was in a random music shop in Melbourne and I came across a run of Fenders that were made from reclaimed wood. There was a Jazzmaster that caught my eye. I even went back later that day and played it through my rig, and it was amazing, however it really didn't suit the tones I use for The Beautiful Monument so I tried to make the "responsible" adult decision and didn't purchase it… I think about that guitar all the time.

What would your signature model look like?
It would probably be an offset shape, shell pink with a maple neck, alder body with just a humbucker, depending on when you catch me. I'm really digging the DiMarzio Crunch Labs, so maybe I'd put that in there – and an EverTune bridge.

If you could jam with any guitarist, dead or alive…
That's a tough one, but honestly after all of the COVID setbacks from the last few years, and being stuck in different states to each other, I honestly would take jamming with The Beautiful Monument's other guitarist, Andy, and our bassist Amy. It's a bit of a gooey response, but they are both very different guitarists and people that give me the most joy and inspiration when I play with them.

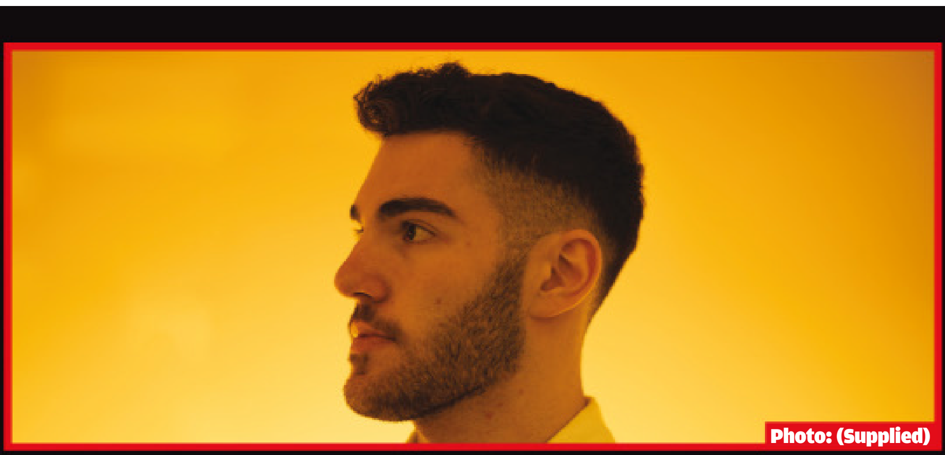


Photo: (Supplied)

KEYAN HOUSHMAND

HAILS FROM KAURNA/ADELAIDE, SA
PLAYS SOLO
SOUNDS LIKE A DJENTLE STREAM OF UNFILTERED CHAOS
LATEST DROP *GRADIENT* (EP OUT NOW INDEPENDENTLY)

What's your current go-to guitar?
My current go-to guitar is my Jackson Juggernaut ET7 Misha Mansoor signature. I actually own the USA-made six- and seven-string variants of the same guitar, but I don't see myself picking them up as much these days after receiving the import versions. This guitar was kindly gifted to me from the guys at Fender/Jackson Australia, who came across my love for the USA Misha Mansoor signature guitars through my social media accounts. I couldn't be more grateful, as it is an absolute beast of a guitar.

How did you initially fall in love with the instrument?
My first ever guitar was a nylon-string Ashton acoustic, which was gifted to me by my uncle on my fifth birthday. I was always really interested in music, with Michael Jackson being my favourite artist at the time. It wasn't until I got that first guitar that I started listening to more guitar-oriented music. After finding out that I got a guitar for my birthday, I remember both of my uncles – on the other side of the family – twisting my young, malleable brain into getting familiar with bands like Led Zeppelin, AC/DC and KISS. Even though my parents put me into lessons straight away, I was never forced to learn guitar or anything like that. I kind of just picked it up and never put it down, which is crazy to think about, 17 years later. You'd think by now I might be sick of it, but the truth is that I couldn't be any more in love with the instrument than I am right now.

What inspires you as a player?
My influences are from a lot of different places at the moment. Some influences aren't even related to the guitar at all, like Dua Lipa. My major influences tend to come naturally from whatever I'm listening to at that point in time, as I'll subliminally try to learn and imitate what I'm hearing. Bands I'm really enjoying these days are ERRA, Spiritbox, Northlane, Loathe, Sleep Token and Meshuggah (still).

I've always been a huge advocate for learning songs you enjoy, rather than practicing traditionally through scales or something like that. I can't read music and don't know much theory, but breaking down the tab of a song I love always teaches me so much. I think most people get stuck by viewing tabs as "a bunch of single notes and numbers on a page that get you from point A to point B", but I've always enjoyed learning tabs with a more holistic approach.

For example, deciphering the song structure, why certain notes are here, why this works, why that chord progression sounds nice here, etcetera. From there, I take whatever I learn and try to implement them into my own riffs and songwriting sessions, whether that's something as precise as a specific chromatic lick or something as broad as a chord progression.

Are you much of a gear nerd?
I'm a hopeless gear nerd. It doesn't matter what kind of gear it is, I'm always fascinated by tone, and how certain pieces of gear affect the way I sound. I don't really see myself as a "tone snob", though – I'm not really fussy about tubes versus digital, etcetera. At the end of the day, if it sounds good, it sounds good. That's the only factor I really take into consideration when discussing and using gear.

I think my thirst for knowledge around gear has come from necessity, as getting the "right tone" on a detuned, extended range guitar can be a bit annoying on "traditional" gear. My favourite type of gear will always be guitars. It's a double edged sword, because on one hand I know exactly what I want in a guitar, but on the other hand it might be hard to even find a guitar to satisfy all those needs in the first place. That's why I love the Misha Mansoor signature models, as they pretty much tick every single box – whether that be the shape of the guitar, or something as trivial as the truss rod wheel placement.

Photo: Elsa Cairns

NICK HAUSER

HAILS FROM NAARM/MELBOURNE, VIC
PLAYS IN OUTRIGHT
SOUNDS LIKE POWERFUL, NO-HOLDS-BARRED HARDCORE
LATEST DROP *KEEP YOU WARM* (LP OUT NOW INDEPENDENTLY)

What's your current go-to guitar?
It's a 2014 Gibson RD Artist reissue. I fell in love with RDs a few years ago when their wacky shape caught my eye. I love the way they sound, play and sit – and the fact that they're a bit of an oddball model that you don't see very often. This particular one looks killer, too. It's white with gold hardware, block inlays and a fancy Artist headstock detail.

How did you initially fall in love with the instrument?
My late father was a guitarist, and from as early as I remember, I would go and see his band play and strum away on his guitars. I started playing on his MIJ Stratocaster and Telecaster, but then my own first guitar was a three-quarter-sized Cort electric that I got when I was eight. I still have it, along with Dad's Strat and Tele that I learned to play on.

What inspires you as a player?
I love guitarists who think outside the box, particularly in the punk-rock and hardcore genres. That doesn't mean they have to be a shredder by any means, as there's beauty in simplicity – but even a different chord voicing or melodic idea can really take a song to the next level and make it more interesting. An example is Stephen Egerton from Descendents and All. He's the only guitarist in the band, but the sound is never left empty due to his inventiveness and ability to rethink a simple idea. I think of myself as a solid, interesting rhythm guitarist who can play a bit of lead if required.

Are you much of a gear nerd?
Very much so! I've been buying, selling and collecting in some way, shape or form for almost 20 years. I love my Gibson RDs, my Soldano SLO100, Marshall JCM800 and Klon KTR overdrive. My most important pedal, however, is the trusty Boss TU-3!

Do you have any 'white whales'?
I've been lucky enough to own a whole bunch of awesome pieces of gear in my time, but in keeping with my love of weird Gibsons, I would love to own a Gibson Moderne one day.

What would your signature model look like?
This is a tough one to narrow down! Probably an RD-esque body with binding, 25.5-inch scale, set neck, bound rosewood fretboard with block inlays, Seymour Duncan JB bridge humbucker, Lollar Jazzmaster neck pickup, and a Mastery bridge and vibrato for versatility and dive-bombs!

If you could jam with any guitarist, dead or alive…
Eddie Van Halen. I would butcher 'Panama' and if he didn't laugh me out of the room, I'd ask him to teach me how to use a Floyd Rose!

Photo: Tom Wilkinson

XANDER BURGESS

HAILS FROM EORA/SYDNEY, NSW
PLAYS IN JOHNNY HUNTER
SOUNDS LIKE NEW-WAVE POP WITH A TASTEFUL GRIT
LATEST DROP *WANT* (LP OUT NOW VIA COOKING VINYL)

What's your current go-to guitar?
It's a 1996 Fender Stratocaster in midnight wine, which I saw for sale at a shop out in West Sydney. I've always preferred Strats for their snappiness and versatile tones, but I fell in love with the deep purple on this one a few years ago and haven't looked back.

How did you initially fall in love with the instrument?
I fell in love in year seven music class. Being able to play multiple notes at once was something that really intrigued me, and I was always interested in writing originals over learning hot solos. My first axe was a cheap Stratocaster-shaped beginner electric, which mum bought me when I was 15. I think she was just sick of me playing an old acoustic with four strings…

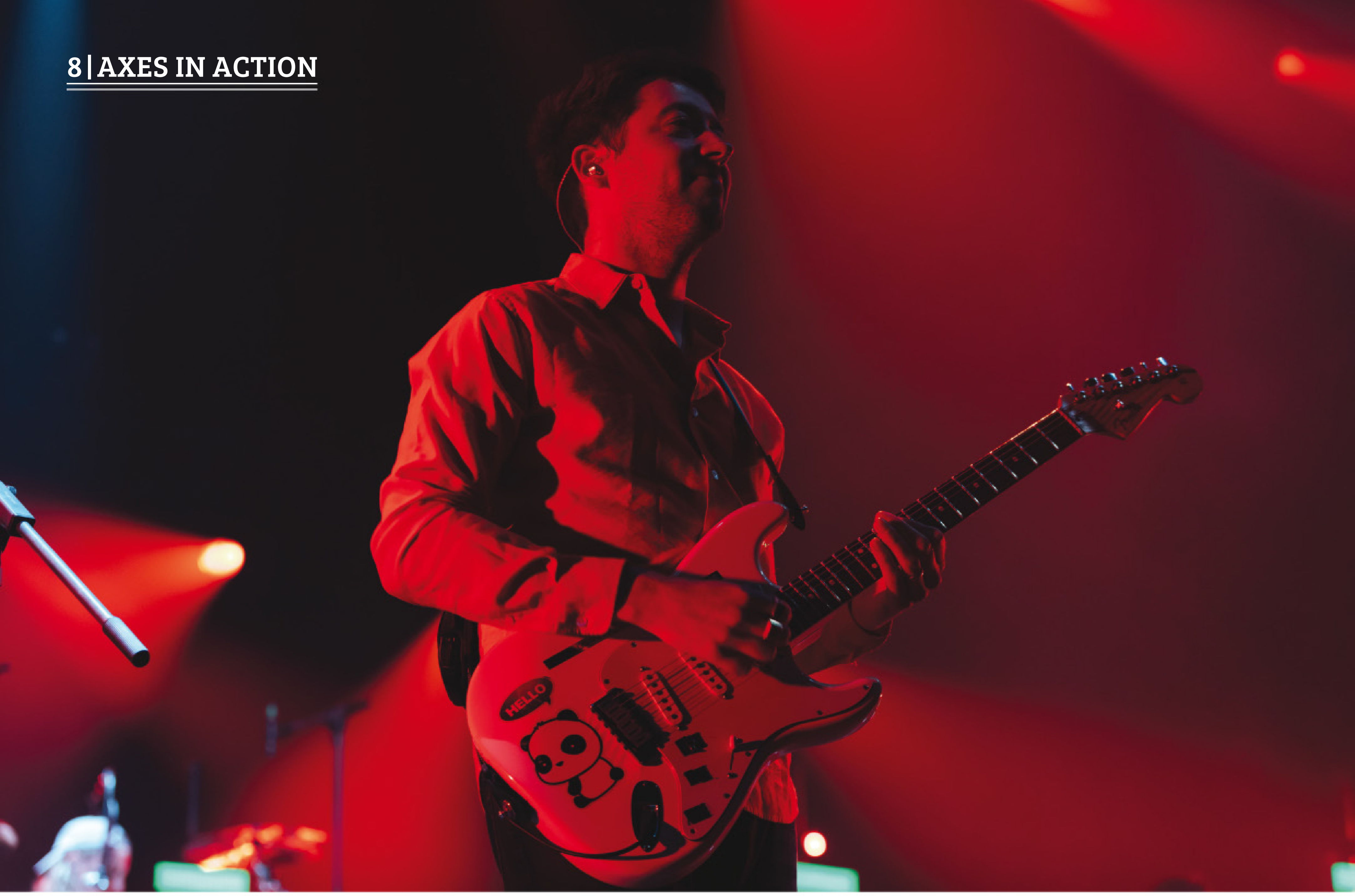
What inspires you as a player?
As a guitarist I've always been interested in rhythms and chords, and favoured simple and repetitive melodies. I listened to a lot of David Bowie and Talking Heads growing up, and later fell in love with The Cure, so I feel they are the primary influences that really come through in my writing.

Are you much of a gear nerd?
As a young guitarist I never had an ear for finding overdrive tones, but when I couldn't even get close to sounding like The Cure – with their chorus, flanger and reverb combos – I started to fall in love with pedals. My favourite would have to be my Boss CE-2 Chorus. It's a simple pedal but it's become such a staple for my sound that I actually start to feel weird when it's not on.

Do you have any 'white whales'?
I'd love to get my hands on an original Starcaster. Huge fan of the sunburst.

What would your signature model look like?
Definitely a Strat, the shape is perfect. Deep red. Cream pickguard. Gold hardware. Roasted maple neck with a dark wood fretboard. I'd add in a Seymour Duncan SH-4 JB humbucker on the bridge, and a sustain switch because why not?

If you could jam with any guitarist, dead or alive…
Jimi Hendrix has always had a place in my heart. No doubt we'd play *Are You Experienced* front to back.



THE WOMBATS

WHERE
JOHN CAIN ARENA
NAARM/MELBOURNE, VICTORIA

WHEN
FRIDAY JUNE 10TH, 2022

REVIEW
ELLIE ROBINSON

PHOTOS
MATIJA SMOJVER

ALFIE TEMPLEMAN

It felt weird to watch The Wombats play an indoor venue. Before tonight we'd never seen the British indie-rockers at their own show, but we've seen them countless times at festivals like Falls, Field Day, Groovin The Moo, Splendour In The Grass, Yours & Owls, Spilt Milk... Pretty much every one in the country, really. But there's a reason why they're so beloved in that unique festival atmosphere: their music is inescapably fun, their energy is infectiously affable, and their lowkey setup means the vibe steals the spotlight, not the spectacle.

So ahead of their first, headliner-exclusive trip Down Under in three years – a lengthy gap when you consider that before then, they'd visited at least once a year since 2010 – the question loomed: could The Wombats keep us entertained when they're all there is to entertain us?

Before learning the answer, we were treated to some canapés in the form of Brisbane alt-pop trailblazer Jaguar Jonze – an interview with whom you'll find on page 26 – and English indie-popstar Alfie Templeman. Flanked by her three-piece backing band, the former stormed out with her eyes wide and soul alight. She wasted no time in stirring up a storm, cutting right to the point with the fiery, riot grrrl-adjacent 'Who Died And Made You King?'.

Other cuts from debut LP Bunny Mode – 'Cut' and 'Trigger Happy' being two notable standouts – made for walloping inclusions; they were too new for the packed crowd to elicit singalongs (which is fair – the album was still a week away at this point), but performing them with a kind of raw, unrelenting energy that's impossible to fake, Deena Lynch and co. virtually demanded we all at least dance to them.

Lynch appeared onstage without her signature blue Telecaster, but thanks to touring bandmate Joe Fallon, there was no shortage of slick, swaggering riffs to be enamoured by. He shined especially bright in the set's closing number, a cover of Nirvana's classic '93 hit 'Heart Shaped Box' that Lynch reinvented into an alt-pop scorcher that stunningly straddled the line between radiant and sleazy. Our prediction is that by her third album, Jaguar Jonze will headlining venues like the 10,000-capacity John Cain Arena.

By the time he and his band breezed into the first chorus of the silky, yet striking '3D Feelings', it was obvious that Alfie Templeman was perfect for this tour. His head-turning brand of soulful, groove-inflected indie-pop went down a treat, duly hyping the crowd with his frenetic noodling and swoon-worthy vocal runs, but keeping things just restrained enough that it never felt too bubblegummy. He offered a feeling of reprieve after Jaguar Jonze's belting intensity, but he was lively enough to set a bright and bubbly mood for The Wombats to revel in.

In five short years, Templeman's released one full-length album, seven EPs, and a record that sits somewhere in-between the two formats – all before the age of 20, no less. As proved by his short 'n' sweet showcase on this arena stage, his prolificacy certainly doesn't come at the expense of his talent – if only there wasn't a curfew so he could have the four-hour set he deserved.

Speaking of acts that deserve as much time onstage as they damn well please, you'd be hard-pressed to find a Wombats fan willing to complain about their sprawling setlists. The Liverpudlian trio don't seem to believe in the concept of "filler songs" – the shortest break they've had between records lasted three years, but the trade-off is that none of them bore for even a second – so with five full albums worth of bangers to pluck from, it stands to reason that they'd need a rather lengthy set. Billed for 90 minutes, they ended up playing for closer to two hours, squeezing in all the hits from their first four albums amid a measured showcase of cuts from their latest, January's Fix Yourself, Not The World.

The same way they start the record, 'Flip Me Upside Down' and 'This Car Drives All By Itself' started the set by setting the tone for what would be to come: a lot of sugary, high-octane indie jammage, but just as much suave, pseudo-mature rock'n'rollery. 'Ready For The High' was a key example of the latter – and worked perfectly as a tailer for 'Cheetah Tongue' off 2018's Beautiful People Will Ruin Your Life – while tucked at the bottom of the set, 'If You Ever Leave, I'm Coming With You' offered oodles of luminous, life-affirming buoyancy.

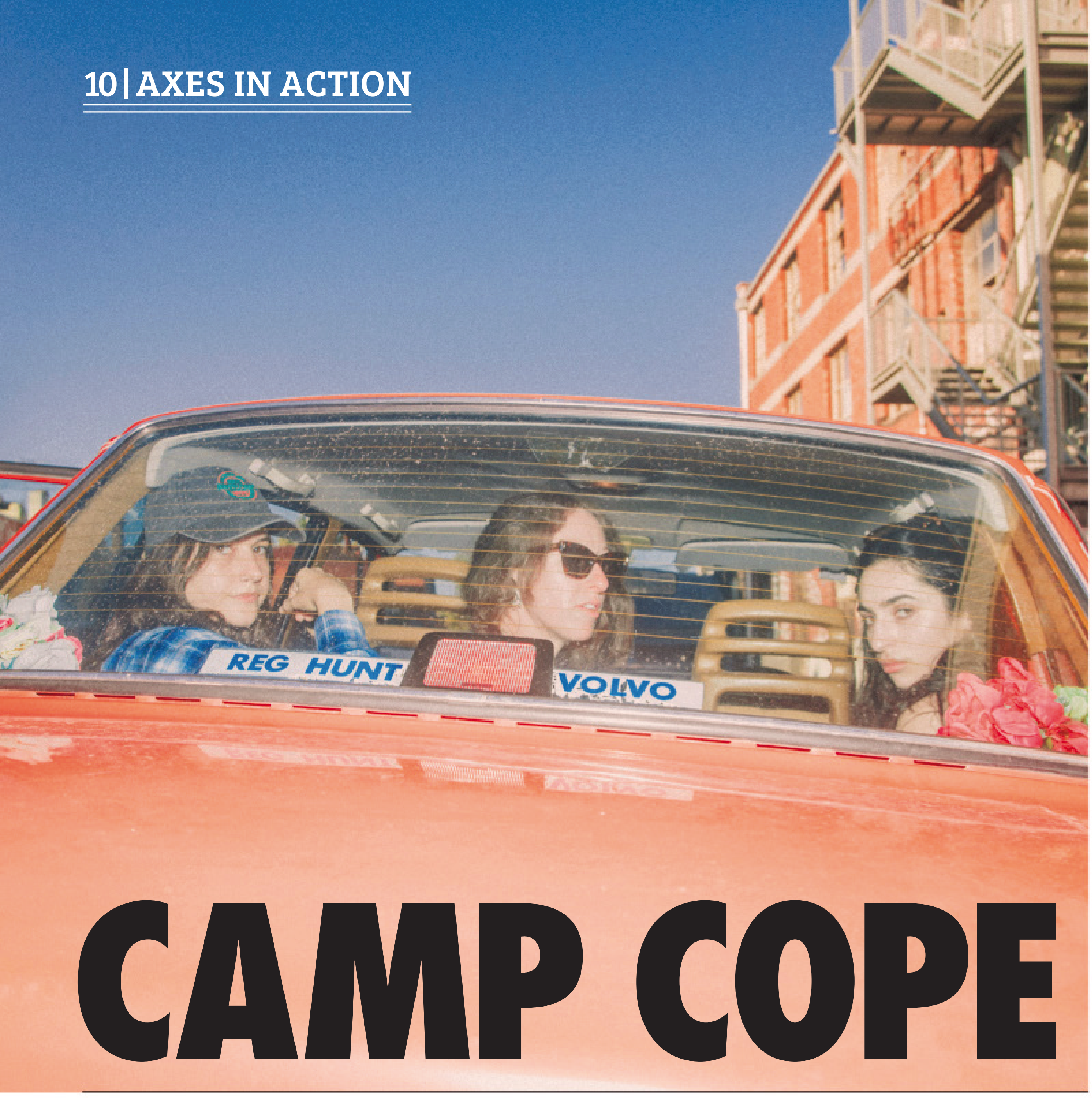
The Wombats themselves were in fine shape. Matt Murphy has this kind of easygoing disposition – neither blithesome nor blasé, but somewhere in the middle – that makes him an interesting frontman; he cares enough about his crowd to indulge them in quick quips of banter between songs, but doesn't let the grinding pursuit of being personable impede on his performance. That was certainly the case tonight, although he did seem a little more relaxed than usual – almost every song in the set was given a lighthearted note of context, and he freely traded jokes with bassist Tord Knudsen and Dan Haggis.

As a trio, the band have an impressively wide-ranging tonal palette. This can spell trouble in a live show – especially when that palette diversifies in different ways between albums, and the setlist spreads songs from them evenly throughout (ie. exactly this set) – but The Wombats' performance never faltered because Murphy, Knudsen and Haggis all worked to each other's strengths. Songs with more demanding vocal runs shone with Knudsen's twangy, rounded basslines, while the more energised cuts had Haggis cutting sick at 110 percent.

It may have lacked the tight and twinkly revelry of a festival set, but with no restraints to what they were capable of, The Wombats delivered an overall fantastic show. It's without a doubt they'll make a prompt return to outdoor stages and golden-hour sets – but the next time they do, we might just head along to a sideshow as well. The Wombats at a festival are a bit of a different beast to The Wombats in a room done up just for them – their natural habitat, if you will – and as we were relieved to learn tonight, both are just as wonderful.

JAGUAR JONZE

LIME CORDIALE
THE WOMBATS



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WHERE
THE FORUM
NAARM/MELBOURNE, VICTORIA

WHEN
FRIDAY MAY 13TH, 2022

REVIEW
ELLIE ROBINSON

PHOTOS
NICK MCKK

Catching her breath after showing off her ravishing dance moves, Georgia Maq chuckled slyly, “I really like not playing the guitar.” Opening with a breathtaking yidaki performance from Dharug luminary Kiernan Ironfield, Camp Cope kicked off their hometown show at Melbourne’s Forum – a gig we’ve spent years eagerly awaiting, in a venue we’ve always wished the band would one day headline – with ‘Keep Growing’, one of the oldest songs in their catalogue and a bonafide staple of their setlists. It felt like a statement: bands usually hold off on their biggest hits ’til the end of the set, but when every song feels utterly enormous, why not start off on a banger?

Embracing its ironclad themes of self-love and empowerment, Maq slunk freely around the stage, shaking her hips and vibing out with the crowd – her biggest ever on home turf, swooning over and latching on to every word she sung – like nothing else mattered. Filling her role on the fretboard was new touring guitarist Jennifer Aslett (ex-San Cisco), who alongside the gig’s Auslan interpreter, appearing via Auslan Stage Left, gelled effortlessly with Maq and her chosen sisters.

Though she made the most of her newfound freedom whenever Aslett took over on the guitar, Maq stopped in her tracks regularly, taking stock of her grandiose surrounds, the sea of dancing bodies in front of her, and her similarly elated bandmates with the biggest, dorkiest and most authentic smile on her face. When she, drummer Sarah “Thomo” Thompson and bassist Kelly-Dawn Hellmrich formed Camp Cope in the halcyon days of 2015, they never thought they’d become one of the biggest alt-rock bands in the country, let alone the world.

A show at the Forum always seemed like a pipe dream, but finally having it become a reality felt right: we’ve seen the trio play in pubs and parking lots, backyards and even their local council hall, but it’s here – with a towering stage flanked by ceramic statues, where the ceiling is studded with glittering lights to emulate stars in a night sky – that Camp Cope absolutely belong. Tonight’s show came in support of their recent third album, Running With The Hurricane. The songs on it were purpose-made for theatres, and that was unquestionably clear here. Their cinematic breadth shone with the Forum’s reverberant acoustics, every twangy, noodly note and crisp beat struck with intense poignancy.

An early highlight was ‘One Wink At A Time’, where Cable Ties drummer Shauna Boyle appeared to perform the trumpet part she plays on the album version. Her appearance drew rapturous applause from the crowd, but little did we know she’d only be the first in a stacked roster of cameos. Angie McMahon was brought out to duet with Maq on ‘The Screaming Planet’, which Maq opened with an anecdote about how the pair wrote it together on a whim in McMahon’s living room. The fellow Naarm artist’s harmonies elevated the song to inconceivable heights, turning the already powerful ballad into a heady, heart-melting anthem.

Sandwiched between those two songs was ‘The Mountain’, which Maq explained was inspired heavily by Frightened Rabbit. A cover of ‘Heads Roll Off’ had been a staple in Camp Cope’s set ever since Frightened Rabbit frontman Scott Hutchison died in 2018, and as Maq clued us in, ‘The Mountain’ owes a creative debt to it. Learning that they finished and released the song as somewhat of a tribute to Hutchison, aiming to encapsulate his spirit and ethos, made their performance of it a thousand times more impactful.

Maq weaved these song-enhancing tidbits of context fluidly into the set, using humour and storytelling to make it a more enriching performance (for both us and the band). She’d never been much for stage banter in years past, but it adds a wealth of character to these songs. We learned, for example, that ‘One Wink At A Time’ was named after The Replacements’ own 1990 song in the hope that they’d sue (and in turn acknowledge) Maq. Before taking to a grand piano to perform ‘Sing Your Heart Out’ unaccompanied, the frontwoman cited Kanye West and The Chicks as its two extremely unpredictable influences.

“I wanted there to be a piano song on Running With The Hurricane because I am, like, deceptively good at it,” Maq said as her band slinked off. The solo performance was mesmerising, but it was when Courtney Barnett came out for the soaring crescendo – of course wielding her dazzling red Jaguar – that we truly melted into the moment. The stage became crowded for a harmony section, for which Maq and her bandmates, Barnett, Boyle and McMahon were joined by Cecil Coleman of Body Type, Julia Jacklin, Jacob Diamond and Fred Leone. “Phenomenal” doesn’t even come close to describing it.

Barnett made another cameo earlier in the set, adding her signature dirty, grunge-adjacent bite to the otherwise ultra-pretty ‘Caroline’. It set the tone for Maq’s own playing to shine on ‘Blue’, into which she interpolated the iconic refrain of Wheatus’ ‘Teenage Dirtbag’. She admitted afterwards that she was “embarrassingly obsessed” with the 2000 hit in her teens, before declaring that “emo’s not dead” and officially branding Camp Cope “a power-emo band”.

Tight as all the new songs were, it was equally great to see how Camp Cope’s older material shone in new ways, both with the band’s evolution over the last four years and the Forum’s stateliness. Cuts from 2016’s self-titled album – cosier and more lowkey, with minimalist structures and lyrical runs that follow Maq on her labyrinthine streams of consciousness – soared with a homely, yet authentically powerful energy. The first time we saw Maq perform ‘Done’, it was to a crowd of no more than ten in the corner of a suburban pub. Watching her play it at the Forum, we felt like parents in the crowd of our kid’s uni graduation.

Of course, no part of the night felt as enthralling as the set-ending performance of ‘The Opener’. Again joined by their full cast of special guests, Camp Cope delivered an infectiously impassioned performance of their 2018 hit. Several times throughout the set, Maq had stressed the notion of inclusivity – that Camp Cope shows are safe spaces where anybody can be themselves without judgement. It’s a sentiment many bands spout but often rings hollow – but here, it didn’t just feel genuine, it was genuine. Nothing made that clearer than seeing a sea of people, galvanised by their community, scream along to every word of a song that was written in response to division, but has gone on to become an anthem of unity.

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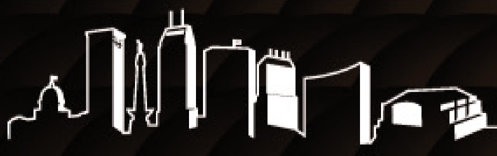

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GROWING FORWARD

ALEX THE ASTRONAUT WALKS US THROUGH THE COLOURFUL CHAOS OF HER SECOND ALBUM, *HOW TO GROW A SUNFLOWER UNDERWATER.*

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **JAMIE HEA**

It was a weird time in the world, to say the very least, when Alexandra Lynn released her first album as Alex The Astronaut, *The Theory Of Absolutely Nothing*, in August 2020. We've since begun to regain some sense of normalcy – however fractured it may be – but Lynn's personal journey over the past two years certainly wasn't one she took down straight and/or clear paths. Her second album, *How To Grow A Sunflower Underwater*, commits to memory the route that she took, with all of its potholes and puddles intact.

The record sounds nothing short of magical, with strings, horns, synths and sound effects flourishing widescreen soundscapes pillared by warming folk melodies and cool indie-rock beats. You'll melt into its transcendental grasp before the lyrics start to make sense, and when they do, you'll be welcomed to an entirely separate world of colour and calamity. In it, Lynn explores themes of personal growth and self-reflection, reckoning with trauma, embracing vulnerability, taking stock of the past and powering on into the future.

Ahead of its release later this month, Lynn sat down with Australian Guitar to explain how she brought this cinematic explosion of emotion to life.

Do you feel like you've grown up as a person in tandem with your artistic evolution, in that both sort of inform each other?

Yeah, definitely. When I started being a career musician, I'd only just finished uni, I didn't really know anything about that world. Like I loved writing songs, and I'd played some shows, but I really just went into it headfirst, and it took a few years for me to understand everything. I didn't know anything about recording, or gear, or travelling, or any of that stuff. But I feel like I've built up a lot of those skills, and things are really opening up now. I feel like I've developed a lot as an artist [with this album], and that's really, really exciting.

After putting out Theory and going on the journey you did with that album, did you feel more galvanised in your confidence when it came to building up the narratives on this one?

I have no idea, to be honest. I just write songs about what's happening to me, and I've had quite a fair few things happen in the last four years. I think that was the difference: when I was doing the first record, I was travelling and putting songs together – I'd never written an album before, so I didn't really know what I was doing – but the second album was a bit more intentional. I'd had all of these events happen, and they gave me a bit of a theme, I guess. Maybe that galvanised the narrative a little bit more.

There's a lot of rawness and vulnerability on *Sunflower*, but I think ultimately, it feels more triumphant than anything. Was that a concerted effort, to balance the heaviness with a sense of buoyancy?

Definitely. That's how I've always approached songs – I don't want to take people to a dark place and just leave them there and say, "Good luck!" I think it's really important to kind of sandwich these themes with… not 'false hope', but a sense of grandeur or catharsis. A big influence for this record was the Gang Of Youths albums, and how they've built these songs around really traumatic events that happened to [frontman Dave Le'aupepe], but when you listen to them, you only feel the triumph that came after it.

I mean, sometimes you need a thesaurus to even understand what [Gang Of Youths' songs] mean – but even when you don't understand what they mean, the expressive nature of their arrangements mean that they get across whatever emotion they're putting into it. That's what I took from those influences – I added in a lot of string elements and horns, and all of those kinds of things, to make it feel really cathartic. [When you listen to the album] you're not just stuck on the lyrics, which a lot of the time are quite intense.

What was it like having a much broader palette of tones to play with on this record, as opposed to Theory?

It was so exciting! I recorded with Sam [Cromack, vocals/guitar], Dean [Hanson, guitar/bass] and Dan [Hanson, drums] from Ball Park Music, and then my band – Vlada [Edirippulige, bass], Luke [Pallier, guitar/keys] and Kaleah [Scanlon, drums] – all in the room together. Sometimes we'd do it in shifts, with different people coming in and out of the sessions. And so I had kind of built up a relationship with my band, but then also with the Ball Park people. We'd had the songs for a little while – because of all the border closures and lockdowns, we got delayed like five times, so whenever we actually got into the studio, it was just so exciting.

I'd come in with a demo, and Sam would be like, "Okay, what one are we working on today?" We'd play the demo at the start, but I also had a playlist of influences, so we would go through a few of them, and then we'd kind of work out a game plan from there. We'd try to get through a song a day, and most of the time we did. The really exciting part was that we had two drummers, Dan and Kaleah, then Dean, Sam and Luke playing the guitar, Sam and Luke playing keyboards, and Vlada playing bass, so we had all of these musicians adding different elements to it.

I spent a lot of time on those influences, trying to figure out which bits from them needed to be included. Sometimes it was like, "Okay, this is a very Bruce Springsteen-y song." There was a lot of Phoebe Bridgers, too. I think 'South London' is one where it was an equal split between those two. 'Haunted' was a lot more Phoebe. But it was a lot of troubleshooting at the start, and some of the songs were harder than others. 'Growing Up' took a really long time, and I was really nervous about that. I think we had to start it again at one point – and the same with 'Haircut'. You need to listen to everything like 50,000 times a day, so by the end of the day, you're kind of like, "Is this something, or is this shit?"

At the end of [most days in the studio], we'd send all the tracks off to Daniel [Chae, composer] and Miro [Mackie, engineer], who we worked with in the US. They did 'Something Good' over the internet, which was really cool, but once I did that song with them… The strings and horns that they do are just next level, so I was like, "We have to send them everything." Daniel plays all the instruments himself, it takes him like an hour. And so by the time we got to the morning after we'd made a demo, we basically had a full orchestra on it.

I've never had that, with the palette thing – I mean, some of the songs sound like we've done them in $100,000 studios, but they were all just made over the internet. To hear it all come together now, it just makes me really proud. All these textural elements that we got to play with, and all those new things that I'd never worked with before… That's been the most exciting part about [making] this album.

REIGNITING THE FLAME

WE THOUGHT THE DAY WOULD NEVER COME, BUT **ALEXISONFIRE** ARE FINALLY BACK WITH A NEW ALBUM. LET'S DIVE RIGHT IN.

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **VANESSA HEINS**

There are fans of Alexisonfire who are younger than the gap between their last two studio albums. The Canadian post-hardcore legends released their fourth full-length effort, *Old Crows / Young Cardinals*, in 2009, two years before they prematurely dropped off the face of the earth. They reunited in 2015, but at the time, were hesitant to say whether new music was on the cards.

Standalone singles – 'Familiar Drugs' and 'Complicit' in 2019, and 'Season Of The Flood' in 2020 – sent fans into a frenzy thinking LP5 was finally inbound, but as frontman Dallas Green tells Australian Guitar, that was never the case. For all intents and purposes, Alexisonfire planned to release new music as it came to them, refusing to bind themselves to the pressures of a full album...

...And then the pandemic happened. With no opportunities to tour, travel or, for long stretches of the past two years, go outside at all, the band turned to songwriting in abundance, and by the time they could reconvene, there was a whole new record of material to be hashed out. And out, did they hash. The end result is *Otherness*, a record that Alexisonfire say represents the band better than any of their first four.

So goes their mission statement: "A continuous thread through the fabric of Alexisonfire is the state of otherness. Otherness drew us all to spaces where a band like this could be formed. We attract the type of individuals that have all felt the sensation of being strange or unique. Perceived or otherwise, otherness has followed us through childhood, adolescence, and into our adult lives. It drives our tastes and proclivities. It bonds us with ourselves and others. And make no mistake, even at our most domestic and mundane moments, we are true outliers."

So, 13 years since the last one, Alexisonfire are back with a new album. To celebrate, we got down to the wire with Green about all things *Otherness*.

How does this record encapsulate Alexisonfire's evolution since 2009?

When we started working on the songs, we realised that we only sound like Alexisonfire, y'know? We don't sound like anybody else. So there wasn't this idea of, "Oh, let's have a conversation about what we're going to sound like now." We just started writing songs. We'd always come [into a session] and talk about what songs we liked, and what records we were listening to at the time – and that sort of seeps into the songs a little bit, but I think it does more subconsciously than from an actual sound perspective.

When we started making this record, we were all getting really jazzed about what we were creating. And somewhere along the way, we discovered a new version of us, y'know? We realised that we didn't have to be tied to any nostalgia, we didn't have to find whatever was invigorating us when we were kids – we could just be whatever we are in this moment.

Well for the past seven years, you've sworn that this reunion was anything but a nostalgia trip or a cash grab. So that's just putting your money where your mouth is, right?

Yeah, and I mean, that's the blessing and the curse of this band, that we make records this way. I don't feel like we sound like anybody else, so it's kind of hard to describe us – you either like it or you don't, y'know? But I think we definitely unlocked something new in our sound, and in how we approach – and can approach – making a record, because of our experience. Most of us kept making music while we were apart, whether we were playing with each other or doing our own things. I've done nothing but write songs and make records. Wade has been making film scores and starting a hundred of his own bands...

In a way, it felt like we were making the first record of a new band. We didn't have a record deal, we didn't have a team, and we didn't put any pressure on ourselves to follow something up – we didn't just come off tour for another record, and we weren't trying to come up with something we could take out on the road. It was like we had that sense of youthful exuberance again, with no care in the world apart from, "Isn't this incredible, that we get to make music together?"

I think that really informed the process. We'd go into the studio and be like, "Hey, let's try some three-part harmonies today! Let's put a Moog synthesiser on this song. Let's have songs that are super beautiful, with no screaming, and then let's have some of the heaviest songs we've ever written." There were no rules. And that's what the record sounds like – it just sounds like the five of us being super excited about our ability to create.

Having done those four City And Colour records and You+Me, had you developed any new techniques or playing styles you wanted to incorporate into Alexisonfire?

Well, it was great that Wade and I produced the record ourselves, because we weren't tied to anybody else's approach to making a rock record. We used our own experiences to make it sound the way we wanted it to sound. And one of those really fun things was that we made the whole album using these little combo amps. We'd never made an Alexis record like that before, but it was something we really wanted to do. Because we had written all the songs with combo amps, then demoed them with combo amps, so we were like, "Let's just keep using these – we'll figure out how to make it heavy." Y'know, you don't always need to have 16 Marshalls lined up to make something sound heavy.

And we were very adamant about making this a human record. I think with our old records, they sound pretty raw, and we made them as rawly as we could, but we were young, and we still did the whole studio process, like, "Let's record the beds together, but then do a bunch of overdubbing and go to the grid, quantise the drums..." All that bullshit. Whereas on this record, we didn't do any of that. There's overdubs, sure, but only because there's so many f***ing layers of sound on the record, it would be impossible to do live. But the two main guitars, bass and drums that you hear are pretty much just me, Jordan, Wade and Steele playing together.

Live in the room?

Live in the room, and looking each other dead in the eyes. Because I think when we wrote the songs, we thought to ourselves, "We're a good enough live band, we could make a record this way." We wanted to capture all of the energy that we were feeling when we got back in a room together, because we hadn't been able to play in so long. I think I definitely brought in some of my experience from making those City And Colour records a little bit more loosely.

You've got a little bit more freedom, when you're making quieter music, to just sort of let the room speak. Whereas when you're making super loud, aggressive music, you kind of want everything to be as tight as possible. But I think we all felt comfortable, and we know we're good enough at our instruments and our craft, that we could either fix some of our mistakes later, or just leave them in because they worked for the songs.

What were some of the standouts in your guitarsenal?

Wade and I went berserk with pedals and different tones and all that stuff, but we both basically just used our practice amps. I used a Fender Blues Deville 4x10 from the '90s, which I've had as a practice amp since 2008, and I used a Garnet Revolution III, a 1x12, which is a Canadian amp from the '70s. And then Wade used two Princetons, and all the heavy tones came from tube screamers. I think my main overdrive pedal was a Greer Lightspeed. Our concept was, "What would it sound like if The Black Crowes made a punk-rock album?"

HOME-GROWN HERO

ON THE APTLY TITLED *FARM TO TABLE*, **BARTEES STRANGE** CELEBRATES FAMILY, FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES, AND FOLK-ROCK. WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **LUKE PIOTROWSKI**.

On his punchy and impactful full-length debut, 2020's *Live Forever*, Bartees Strange (or Bartees Leon Cox Jr, if you're being extra formal about it) invited listeners to experience the places that shaped him into the idiosyncratic powerhouse he is today – places like Mustang, Oklahoma, where he settled at age 12 after a childhood spent everywhere from Germany to Greenland; or Flagey, which is often seen as the cultural heartbeat of Brussels.

Live Forever set the scene for Strange's story – so naturally, on its follow-up, we're introduced to the characters that carry its narrative. At its core, *Farm To Table* is a family affair, Strange honouring his roots and those who planted them. It's a homely record, which is reflected in a cruisier and less intense, yet much more dense and ambitious, soundscape. He taps deeper into his country influence, plays more in the pop realm, and is defiantly unafraid of dialling the energy down a notch.

With the album out and making waves just as big as its predecessor – if not bigger – Australian Guitar caught up with Strange to see learn how it came about.

I loved the intensity of Live Forever, but this record definitely feels a little more measured. Where did that mellower vibe come from?

Y'know, I just wanted more pacing. I wanted to show that I had grown a little bit as a musician, and that I could do some more things. I've gotten a little better at producing and recording records, so I wanted to kind of be a little more patient with the songs. I felt like with *Live Forever*, there was so much urgency – like I was trying to get people's attention, y'know? And with this record, it's like, "Okay, now that I have your attention, let's just play some songs. Let's slow it down and really feel the space."

There are still those big moments, like 'Cosigns', 'Heavy Heart', 'Wretched' – I mean, 'Wretched' might be the biggest song I've ever made – but y'know, at the same time, 'Black Gold' is gorgeous. 'Hold The Line' is beautiful. 'Escape This Circus' is so dark and weird and twisty, and 'Hennessy' is super personal. It felt like there were so many other ways to connect [with listeners], and it was fun to explore that.

Would I be right in guessing that there was a bit more of like a blues or a folk influence on this one? That Nashville twang on 'Escape This Circus', that's some god-tier shit.

Yeah. I mean, I grew up playing country music and I grew up in the country. And this record is largely about reflecting on my life, and the people who have meant so much to me in the places that have meant so much to me. A lot of my songs tend to start off as country songs and become something else. Like 'Mustang', off the first record, that's a country song that just got hyped up and turned into this big rock thing. And with this record, like, 'Escape This Circus' has a shuffle underneath it, 'Hold The Line' is all big slide guitars, 'Hennessy' is this weird mix between a soul thing, a jazz thing and a folk thing… Y'know, I feel at home doing all of that, because as a guitar player, that stye was what really touched me first.

I'm interested in how your influences kind of crossover and blend in different ways. Like for example, how do you take your your hip-hop influence, and channel that into something you write on the guitar?

Well, I'm always kind of doing everything. When I was growing up, my mum and dad were really Christian, so I didn't really listen to the radio much. But as I got older, and I had friends that were like driving cars and stuff, I got to hear the radio and hear what other people were listening to. And I was like, "Oh, this is sick, but it feels like Funkadelic, the stuff my dad plays."

I feel like I had a huge gap in my musical understanding, but because of that, I could notice references really clearly. Because all I had listened to was Christian music, gospel, classical music with my mum, and then my dad's Parliament and Funkadelic records. So like, it was like P-funk blues, old country and gospel, and then I missed the '90s, and I missed like everything up until 2004. And then I was like, "Boom – you like Led Zeppelin? Okay, well I don't know who that is, but they sound a lot like Eddie Hazel." Or, "You like this Midwestern emo? Those guitar lines feel a lot like country music!" Those big Telecasters, capos, B-Benders – it's all the same vibe, y'know? Everything kind of just blended together for me.

And I was really in love with recording. I had like a little four-track that I would record all types of little songs and ideas and loops into. I was always fascinated with how [different styles] were related to each other and where things came from, so when I started making music myself, it was just very natural for me to blend those things.

So when it comes to writing songs in all of these different styles, is the sound dictated by the headspace you're in when an idea strikes you? do you have to be in a specific mood to write a trap-core banger, as opposed to a full on country ballad?

Yeah, I mean, they're all vibes. Oftentimes I'll just have a bunch of songs kind of swimming around in my head, and I'll be like, "Oh, this one – I forgot about this one, let me just record this idea really quick." And I'll record it, and just let it sit for a while. And then eventually, I'll pick a date in the future where I'm like, "I'm gonna revisit all these ideas, and see which ones connect with me the most." That's when I start kind of envisioning what a song can become. But it's rare that I'll just sit down and just finish a song. I don't like putting too much pressure on myself.

You get a better sense of objectivity when you come back to an old idea with a new perspective. It helps those ideas to grow, right?

Yeah! It's kind of modular – music is modular. And like you were asking, how do I start blending all these things? It's like, it just starts with a country guitar line, and then I'm like, "Okay, what if we programmed some drums around it?" And then it's like, "That sounds cool, let's bounce that line out into my pedals – let's start twisting some knobs and see what it turns into." And then it's like, "Okay, now let's MIDI sync that to the click and run it backwards." And all of a sudden it's like, "Damn, that country guitar line is now a trap melody!" It's just about giving yourself that time and patience, not being afraid to experiment, and just following the rabbithole.

THE POWER OF THE PISS-TAKE

THREE DECADES INTO HIS CAREER, **BEN LEE** IS STILL FINDING NEW WAYS TO TURN HEADS AND DROP JAWS. CASE IN POINT: HIS WILD NEW ALBUM, *I'M FUN!*

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **BYRON SPENCER**.

For the better part of the past half-decade, Ben Lee has been in his "passion project" era. In the five years that followed his 11th album – 2016's *Freedom, Love And The Recuperation Of The Human Mind* – the Sydney-native indie-pop hero (and shitposting pioneer) released an album of children's music about Islam (*Ben Lee Sings Songs About Islam For The Whole Family*), a musical epic about beer (*B Is For Beer: The Musical*), a covers record of songs that inspired Lee in his teens (*Quarter Century Classix*), and two records as one half of Radnor & Lee with How I Met Your Mother star Josh Radnor.

Now, Lee has returned to his roots for *I'm Fun!* – an album of quirky, folk-tinged indie-rock and pop bangers that sees him come to terms with the fact he's hit his 40s, but with the energy and effervescence of a 13-year-old after one too many red cordials. And in the spirit of making a party record, Lee's filled up the guest-list with bonafide icons, recruiting the likes of Sadie Dupuis (aka Sad13), Sally Seltmann, Washington, Eric D. Johnson, Zooey Deschanel, Georgia Maq and Shamir.

So begs the question: how the f*** did he do it? Thankfully for us, Lee's phone number leaked on the dark web, and our editor had some Bitcoin lying around...

As far as a straightforward, traditional "studio album" goes, it's been a hot minute! Had you kind of started to miss that format?

I always try to abide by what Neil Young once said: "Don't write a song until you have something to say." I've never wanted to make music that felt like it was made for the sake of it. So before I started making this record, what started crystallising in my head were the types of artists that not only made records in their 40s, but made their best records in their 40s.

I was thinking about Lucinda Williams and Tom Waits, and all these songwriters I admire – and I realised that there was this embracing of adulthood, and embracing all the ways you'd have f***ed up, all the successes and failures and wounds. I wanted to mix that idea with the approach that I had the energy of being a teenager. And once I really understood that idea, it was like all these songs just suddenly started spilling out.

One thing I've always loved about you as an artist is how ready you are to take the piss out of yourself. Is the MO just to go in and have as much fun as possible?

Yeah, I've always been interested in being a cheeky bastard and stirring the pot a little bit. I think with this album, it was just about leaning into that, and being like, "Y'know what? Yeah, that's my role." I want to be the person that actually contributes something of value when I'm invited to a dinner party, y'know what I mean? The worst crime is being boring – especially in pop culture, but also at a dinner party. It's fun to look back at my own history with this type of sobriety, being clear-headed about it and being able to playfully embrace even my own mistakes.

Speaking of parties, this album is jam-packed with incredible guests. Where did all of these wild collaborations come from?

I've always been interested in the concept. I started playing music because I wanted to hang out with geniuses – I wanted to be around all the creative people that lit my candle – and the most beautiful thing about building any kind of notoriety is that you get to meet the people behind all the things that invigorate you. Even on my first solo record, like having Liz Phair and Rebecca Gates on it – it's almost like being a party host, saying, "What would happen if I put these different personalities in a room together?"

And then with the pandemic, and the enforced isolation, and the way this album was recorded, it led to me pushing that idea even further and just being like, "Well, everyone I've ever wanted to work with is just sitting at home – let me throw 'em a few hundred bucks and see if they want to lay some shit down."

How do you feel about young creatives approaching you, being the one that they want to collaborate with?

I don't know if I have any particular insight, but some of it is just stamina and perseverance – there's a courage you get, as a young person, by meeting someone a little older, who's walked the path you want to walk, and has survived it. I literally wake up most days and think, 30 years into my career as a leftist indie-rocker, and I've still got a career!? That is bananas! Let alone that it's kind of thriving! But in some ways, I feel more of a kinship with these younger people. They're operating with less rules.

When I was coming up as an artist, the tribalism around music was way more intense. When I had like Mandy Moore sing on 'Ripe', critics were going, "Ooh, Ben Lee's gone pop, he's betrayed his indie roots!" That was in 2007, and that conversation literally does not exist anymore. If you're cool and you're interesting, you can do whatever the f*** you want. And that's how it should be! And I think younger people now are more in that mindset, so I relate to it.

God, imagine the shit you would've gotten up to if TikTok was around 20 years ago.

No thanks [laughs]. TikTok is obviously its own thing, but it's also part of a much larger trend, which has to do with seeing creators as a vessel for much more than the medium they're working in. And I'm on board with that. It might just be because I'm not a prodigal "musician", but I've always viewed it like my mind, my outlook, my psyche... I want to share the whole thing. If music is the vehicle, music is the vehicle – but I want to just be in the conversation and contribute.

In a recent TikTok of your own, you said your favourite guitar was a Gibson J-45. What's the story behind that little monster?

I've always played vintage J-45s, but a couple of years ago I played at the Opera House and I played a new J-45 that I'd rented, and I was like, "Damn, this feels so sturdy!" I wasn't used to having the J-45 experience with a new one, and it was such a unique experience. So I tracked one down, and then after I made the 'Born For This Bullshit' video with Byron Spencer, I took a swatch of that neon pink paint to Wheeler Guitars and got them to match it. And then I just slapped some stickers on it! And now it's got this giant crack in it.

What happened?

So we've got this puppy, Cooper – I mean, I call him a puppy, but he's a f***ing moose, he's enormous. I had the guitar up on a table behind the couch, so it felt very safe to me – but then someone came into the backyard and Cooper jumped off the couch, and with all his weight, landed in the middle of the guitar and caved the top of it in. I was freaked out. Because this whole thing has not been cheap – from getting a brand new J-45, to getting it custom painted – but I took it to this great place called Old Style Guitars, which Mike Viola recommended, and for like $150, they reinforced the bracing. And now it's got a story!

FROM ROCK BOTTOM TO ROCKING OUT

AHEAD OF HER DEBUT AUSTRALIAN TOUR, **CAROLESDAUGHTER** WELCOMES US INTO HER WEIRD AND WONDERFUL WORLD.

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **CASSIDY SKYE.**

When this issue of Australian Guitar hits shelves, Thea Taylor will be in the country for her first-ever shows on local ground. Just a few years ago, however, she would've sworn that the closest she'd ever come to Australia would be in the form of something smuggled out of there illegally. Before making a name for herself as Carolesdaughter, the SoCal-native was a problem child, rebelling against her strait-laced Mormon parents by delving into body mods, hard drugs and perhaps their greatest fear of all, punk-rock.

Taylor's four-year stint of inter-personal calamity – into which she was thrown at age 13 – saw her dragged in and out of rehab multiple times. Her last trip lasted six months, and thanks in no short part to the acoustic guitar she brought along to keep her company, changed her life forever. In the year and some months since then, she's become a household name of any pop-punk fan with a TikTok account, and earlier this year released her banging debut EP, *Please Put Me In A Medically Induced Coma*. She's clean these these days, but the chaos hasn't stopped – only now it's the kind that leaves her cheeks sore from smiling so much.

Before she hopped on the flight down here, Taylor sat down with Australian Guitar to clue us in on her wild journey thus far, and the even wilder journey she has ahead of her.

After the journey you've been on to reach this point, how does it feel to finally have this EP out in the world?

This EP is very near and dear to my heart. It's basically my introduction to who Carolesdaughter is, and I wrote a lot of these songs a really long time ago. It just felt like now was the right time to get them out there – they needed to come out, because I grow really fast as an artist, and I truly believe that my new music is so much better than this EP. But I still feel like these songs are so timeless, and I'm still very proud of the writing. And that's pretty rare for me, to feel that way about really old music. So I really love it.

How did you want this record to paint the picture of who Carolesdaughter is?

Well, since I wrote it in rehab, it's super honest and super self-reflective. It's just me, going into my own head and just like digging deep into what makes me… Me.

Skimming through your SoundCloud, you've made a bunch of music in a bunch of styles – how did you end up locking into this half "folky acoustic pop", half "grungy mall-goth emo" vibe?

Well, another thing about me is that I literally listen to every type of music. I'm talking country, I'm talking rap, I'm talking punk, I'm talking metal – literally every type of music, I have a love and appreciation for. And so as a songwriter, I can't be confined to one single genre. I just love to like to experiment. I wrote all of the songs on an acoustic guitar, so trying to figure out how to produce them and how I wanted the world to hear them, it was pretty hard. Because the way I'd always heard them was just me in my bedroom, or in my treatment room with four other girls, just acoustic and softly sung. But I was like, "I need to make these all into really big songs." Some of them, like 'Cold Bathroom Floor', I kept acoustic, but all the other ones got really fleshed out.

How did the songs evolve from those lowkey acoustic jams into these full-band bangers?

I think what really helped was the resurgence of the whole pop-punk thing, and people being more receptive to that. Because I've always had a love for pop-punk, but everyone else hated it. So I'm glad that people are really f***ing with it now, because I always thought that 'Please Put Me In A Medically Induced Coma' should be one of those hard-hitting songs, but I didn't know how to make it that way.

I'd never worked in a studio before, and I'd never worked with a producer, so this EP was like my way of figuring it all out – working with different people and finding out what I liked and didn't like. I'm super proud of the finished product and I'm super happy with it, but I honestly had no idea it was going to sound like it does until it was made. It was definitely a work in progress, and there was a lot of trial and error with all the songs – but now I feel like I've got a really good grasp on how to do it. And I think my next thing will be a full-length, now that I know what I'm doing.

So is this the direction you see all of your music heading in, or do you think you'll still leap between genres?

No, I think I could never be, like, "I'm done with this style of music for sure." My roots will always be just playing songs acoustically, but I think for my full-length, there's gonna be a little more of a hip-hop element. 'Violent' had the trap drums and the really heavy 808s, and I want to incorporate that into some new music. I have a new song coming out that's very reminiscent of the 'Violent' era, so I think people will be really happy about that. But I'm not saying that I'm never going to make band music ever again, either – I think I'll always come back to whatever… I just love doing everything.

What's your songwriting process like these days?

It still pretty much always starts on the acoustic guitar. Even though the song that's coming out is very much a beat-driven song, it started on the guitar. It just is easier for me to write on it because I don't like going into a room and having someone pull up a beat that's already been made. I can't write to beats, it's always better when I feel like I'm the most involved.

Playing songs that you wrote in rehab – songs that are super vulnerable and soul-baring – can it be pretty emotionally taxing, or is it more just cathartic?

Well I was also in musical theatre, and I did some acting stuff when I was younger, so I feel like I get really into it when I'm performing. So it's like, if I'm singing a sad song, I get sad. Every time I perform 'Cold Bathroom Floor', I feel like crying – like even though I don't feel like I did when I wrote that song anymore. I have definitely gotten a lot better with my mental health and stuff like that, but just playing that song, I'm reminded of how I felt back then – those words came from such an honest place when I wrote them, so whenever I sing them, I can feel the same feelings. And I know that there's probably someone in the crowd who feels that way – just thinking about that, I get sad.

Does it feel like you're taking back control of that part of you, turning what was such a dark part of your life into something so gratifying and positive?

Yeah, definitely. It's crazy to me because I had such a vision when I was in treatment, just being like, "I'm going to play these songs for people! I'm going to play them with a band, and I'm going to perform them in front of people!" And now I'm doing that every night and basically watching my dream come to life. How could anyone ask for more? It's just crazy! I've had a few of the friends I made in rehab actually come out to some shows, and that always means the world to me.

GOOD VIBES ONLY

LIFE IS SHORT, SO WE SHOULD SPEND AS MUCH OF IT PARTYING AS WE CAN. AND WITH THEIR SEVENTH ALBUM, **FOALS** HAS DELIVERED THE ULTIMATE SOUNDTRACK.

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **RASHIDI NOAH**.

There comes a point in every muso's career that album releases stop being special. It's not that they aren't exciting, per se – just that fans will know what they're in for, that feeling of routine has settled in, and it's no longer this big, celebratory event. For most bands and artists, that's around the fifth or sixth album. Foals hit both of those milestones in the same year – 2019, when they released their two-part epic *Everything Not Saved Will Be Lost* – so when word of their seventh album came towards the end of last year, it was exciting, sure, but it wasn't like we leaped up onto our desks and bellowed through the office, "Holy shit, guys, Foals just announced a new album!"

But then we actually heard some of the songs on this thing. Keyboards and bass guitars stole the spotlight, as did a side of Yannis Philippakis' vocal palette that felt a little sprightlier than normal. The hooks hit hard and fast, and the grooves were inescapable. It's hard to believe that *Life Is Yours* came together during a pandemic, because it is easily Foals' most upbeat and electric album, suited only for the biggest and most debaucherous of parties. But most importantly, it's Foals' most special album – a mission statement declaring that only good vibes may enter their circle.

Australian Guitar hit the dancefloor with rhythm guitarist Jimmy Smith to unpack this energetic epic.

For the sake of a hypothetical, let's say I've never listened to a Foals record before – why is this the one I should check out?

Probably because it's [Foals] distilled to its purest form – which makes sense, y'know, there's only three of us left. And I don't know if it was something to do with when it was written, during the pandemic, but we very clearly enjoyed living in our own sound on this record.

Foals have always been a good "party record" band, but this one makes all the others sound like lowkey, emo ballad albums. Where did all of this energy come from?

We're all just trying to be positive during a pretty terrible time. I think that's where the genesis of the whole album came from – we have no interest in heavy or emotional music, so when we were writing, it was just like, "No, let's make this one a little happier." And no-one really wants to hear that either, I don't think. Especially after Coronavirus, it was like, "Let's just do a fun record." As soon as we said that, and we were all okay with it, we were off. I'm glad that people are picking up on that and embracing it.

There's so much going on with this album, musically – it's all very measured, but every new listen offers something new to discover. As both a guitarist and a keyboardist, how did that expanded soundscape open up a new world of possibilities?

I think that's a testament to the producers we were working with – specifically Dan Carey, he was the most experimental out of all of them. When we were demoing this record, I basically just played my guitar straight into my amp. I was like, "I don't want any pedals, I don't want any reverb... I'm sick of all that stuff! I just want a bitchin' guitar sound, and that's it." But then you'd be recording with Dan, and he'd be running everything through all these modular synths and programs and God knows what – his studio is just like Aladdin's cave, it's amazing. It's tiny, you basically just play in the middle of the room, and you're just surrounded by equipment and blinking lights. And he's there like the mad scientist, rushing between instruments and flicking all these switches...

I don't even know what he was doing half the time, to be honest. It was a bit annoying, actually – I got annoyed at times because I didn't know what was happening, and I just wanted to know what was making all the sounds I was playing. But then he explained it all and it was okay. But yeah, we kept everything so simple before we hit the studio, and that enabled the producers to really go to town on the sonics. I also did a lot of exploration into keyboards – I bought a lot of old synths, and I finally learned how to use synthesisers properly – and I bought some nice guitars. I did the whole album on a Fender Jaguar from the mid '60s, which I treated myself to during lockdown. I'd always wanted like a vintage Jaguar, so I was like, "Alright, I'm just gonna get one."

What is it about the vintage Jag that just makes your heart skip a beat?

There's like notes between notes, or something – it just resonates. And there's a unique kind of growl that you can only get from a vintage guitar – specifically a Jaguar. It's something about the pickups, which the new ones just don't have. It's weird, because you can A and B them, and the new one just doesn't sound anywhere near as good. It should be the other way round, really – you'd think they'd've figured out how to make the guitar sound better over time.

This Jaguar was one of the last Fender Guitars made before they got bought by CBS – before they basically got turned into a factory. It's from when they all used to be handmade by one person, basically, just sitting there. I quite liked the idea that maybe this guy put a little bit more love into it because it was literally one of the last ones made before it all changed. So yeah, it's super romantic. And it belonged to some Dutch popstar in the '60s – I don't know his name, but that's what the guy who sold it to me told me. It's beautiful. They used to come with logbooks so you could see who owned them before you, and you'd pass it down the line – but sadly, they've all gone missing. That's one little thing about vintage guitars – you're sort of just the custodians of them.

Did you have the stage in mind when you were putting this record together?

Yeah, definitely. There's this one song on the record called 'The Sound', and when we were doing rehearsals recently, the whole time, we just couldn't stop playing that song. The band next to us in the complex must have been like, "Oh my God, can they stop playing that song!?" We'd play it for hours and hours, and the whole time, I kept thinking of a festival, something like 10,000 people in a tent.

Speaking of which, when are we going to see Foals tear it up in Australia next?

We're definitely working on it. There hasn't been anything mentioned in the way of dates, yet, but the crows have been sent out, and they're going to come back soon with all the information about when we can play Australia. It's just a question of when, y'know? Because logistically, things are a little bit of a nightmare right now. I mean, I don't have to handle any of it, but I feel sorry for the people that do. But we're definitely coming. I don't know whether we'll come and do our own tour, or if we'll tie it in with some festivals – the good about Australia is that there's festivals happening all the time, so you can kind of just cruise in and pretend it's summer anytime.

YER A GIZZARD, HARRY!

THERE AREN'T ENOUGH PAGES IN THIS MAGAZINE TO DESCRIBE **KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD** – SO RATHER THAN TRY, LET'S JUST SKIP STRAIGHT TO THE CHAT…

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **JASON GALEA**.

Even in the year 2022, when every possible combination of genre, format and concept has been done, exhausted, reinvented and exhausted again, there's no band quite like King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard. That's impressive enough on its own, but even more so is the fact that on their 20th album in ten years, the Melbourne-native trip-rockers are still finding new ways to re-invent even themselves.

So far this year, they've dropped two full-length efforts: the long-teased (and vinyl-exclusive) *Made In Timeland*, consisting of two 15-minute acid house jams; and *Omnium Gatherum*, a two-disc, 80-minute journey through all the peaks and valleys – then up into the skies, then deep underground – of King Gizzard's kaleidoscopic artistry. Beginning with their most expansive song to date – the 18-minute 'Dripping Tap' – the record explores everything from synthpop, hip-hop, prog and metal to psych-rock, jazz, funk and folk. It is indeed so colourful and eclectic that in this inexplicable, paradoxical kind of way, it is perfectly cohesive and instantly approachable.

In a rare spot of downtime in-between tour dates and sessions for their 23rd album – the next two have been done and dusted for weeks – Australian Guitar caught up with King Gizzard's guitarist, vocalist, bassist, keyboardist, pianist, setarist and percussionist, Joey Walker.

How does a song like 'The Dripping Tap' come to life? Is it a very meticulous thing, where you're just continuously adding to that structure, or is it more like a jam session that just got way out of hand?

That song is the complete product of a jam, where every single element in there was improvised. We went into the studio for a day, and Ambrose [Kenny-Smith] had that soul-y kind of melody section, so we were like "Alright, let's play that, and just jam through it for as long as it feels right." And then we did that about five times, and we ended up with about six hours of music. And then Stu [Mackenzie] distilled it all down into the best parts from the whole session, and then wrote the words and other melodies over it.

With all the various projects you've got kicking around at any one time, and the massive dissonance in sound from one of them to the next, I'm curious: do you all have the same level of input on every project?

It does differ, but at no point will there ever be a project where there's any deliberate exclusion, or anything like that, Anyone can be as involved as they want to be, or feel like they need to be. Sometimes there are certain albums that might not gel with some of the members; *Infest The Rats' Nest*, for example – one of the more metal-y, thrashy ones – that was literally just me, Stu and [Michael Cavanagh], because we kind of identified with that music a bit more. It's a part of our DNA – we grew up listening to it and playing it, and we learned how to play music with that style.

But then with *Omnium*, Ambrose had more input than he's ever had in King Gizzard, just because of the nature of the songs, they were kind of more suited to him. It's such a good model that we've just kind of fallen into, in terms of how we operate. It keeps things feeling really fresh, y'know? Like with how *Butterfly 3000* was a lot more like electro-centric – some of the guys don't really f*** with that style of music, or have an understanding of how to make it. But to be involved, you kind of have to immerse yourself in it and learn about it. We all try to prioritise growing as musicians, and as a band, with every project we do.

You don't worry about ever hitting a creative wall or reaching burnout?

Not yet [laughs]. It's never a chore for us, and it never has been chore for us, to make the amount of music we have. It's always been more like a necessity, because it's like, that's all we do. It's kind of a compulsion, y'know? The moment that it doesn't come easy, that'll be the moment where we don't do it anymore. But I think the obvious difference [between King Gizzard and other bands] is the template we have for how albums are made. The "traditional" album cycle concept, that doesn't really apply to Gizzard, and we don't apply it to ourselves. We just like try to keep as stimulated as we can, and we just like to keep changing stuff up.

What's your go-to guitar at the moment?

I love my Flying V. It's like a 2002, half-moon inlay, cherry red Flying V, which Stu bought for me when he was in New York just before the pandemic. It's just the best guitar I've ever played. We use that for the heavier songs, so it's tuned a step and a half down.

What is it about the Flying V that makes it so great for those tunes?

I don't know – I've played guitar my whole life, but I'm not like a guitar nerd. I couldn't tell you the difference between two sets of P-90 pickups. But for some reason, whatever it is about that guitar… It's like butter to play. It's quite a hot guitar, but it's not too hot. My other go-to guitar is just like an absolute off-the-shelf, "straight from Allans Music" SG, which… It's good, but I'm thinking about maybe looking around for a different guitar. It might end up being another SG – I really like them, but if I compare the Flying V to the SG, it's just like… The Flying V shits all over on the SG.

What about in the way of pedals and effects?

We keep it really streamlined. I feel like Cook [Craig] might have the most pedals going on – he really f***s with the vibratos and all of those chorus-y, lo-fi vibes. But even so, I feel like the current iteration of his setup is very chilled-out. I run a JHS Superbolt, which I always have on when I have my guitar on a clean channel – that'll just give it a boost and some nice kind of tonal warmth. And then for the metal stuff, I literally just have my Fender Hot Rod DeVille switched to the overdrive channel, and that's it. That's what Stu does as well.

I also have a Wampler Faux Analog delay, which I really like. That's my only delay pedal. And annoyingly, the one I've had since, like, even before King Gizzard started, it just recently broke – and I don't think they make them anymore. So I have a temporary analog delay, which is one of the new Supro delays. It looks really good, but I haven't had a chance to fiddle with it yet. But that's effectively everything – and maybe, like, a Cry Baby or something. It's a very skeleton-crew kind of pedal setup that we have, all things considered [laughs].

HAIL TO THE KINGS

ON THEIR SELF-TITLED DEBUT, YOLNGU SURF-ROCKERS **KING STINGRAY** CELEBRATE CULTURE, FRIENDSHIP, AND THE ART OF THE JAM. WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **LUKE HENERY.**

Growing up together in Yolngu country – the tight-knit community of Yirrkala in North-East Arnhem Land – Yirrŋa Yunupiŋu and Roy Kellaway were surrounded by incredible music. Both are descendents of Indigenous rock royalty, the former being the nephew of Dr. M and the latter being the son of Stuart Kellaway, both of whom were founding members of Yothu Yindi. With music in their blood, Yirrŋa and Roy performed together from their earliest days, whether it was killing time backstage while their parents rocked out to thousands every night, or at school talent shows. It was only a matter of time until they turned rocking out into full-time careers of their own, but King Stingray was never supposed to be what kickstarted them.

The project came out serendipitously, when Kellaway had a random idea for a song while the Yothu Yindi crew were camped at his dad's studio in Tintenbar (a village on the far-northern coast of New South Wales). Within hours of jamming, that idea blossomed into 'Hey Wanhaka', and though it came about as a bit of casual fun, Kellaway (on guitars) and Yunupiŋu (behind the mic) knew they had a hit on their hands. They whacked it online under the moniker King Stingray, and through word of mouth alone, 'Hey Wanhaka' became one of 2020's biggest summer anthems. Enamoured by the reception, Yunupiŋu and Kellaway powered on, ballooning King Stingray into a five-piece – including fellow Yolŋu folk as well as balanda (non-Indigenous peoples) – and whipping up an album of loose, loveable surf-rock belters primed for intimate clubs and sprawling festival stages alike.

Staunchly DIY, uniquely energised, and driven by a striking fusion of modern pop vibes and their own ancestral heartbeat – the band perform in both English and Yolŋu Matha, and twine their big electric guitar riffs with Indigenous instrumentation – King Stingray are a force to be reckoned with. As the band gear up to drop their self-titled debut album, Australian Guitar caught up with Kellaway to riff on how it all came to be.

You and Yirrŋa both grew up around some incredible musicians. Did that inform your own artistries when you started getting into music for yourself?

Yeah, for sure. We feel very optimistic about music and our lives, I think, because of our amazing leaders. We come from a community that is such a small little blip on the map, and yet so many leaders have come out of that community – whether they're leaders in the land rights movement or the Yirrkala bark partition signings in 1963, or leaders of the music world like Dr. M and Yothu Yindi. And in art, y'know, there are so many amazing artists from East Arnhem Land that have gone on to sell their paintings all around the world.

It's such an awesome little community, and I think that having so many incredible people come before us, doing what they love and having a red hot crack, it kind of gives us a nice little boost of confidence. It really pumps us up. And those small town vibes are great – people get behind you and support you, and then they go, "I was there since day one!" We've got so much love for our community, and the love that we get from our community is just as amazing.

So in making King Stingray what it is, how did you want to bring a new flavour to that evolving legacy?

That's a really good question. Because y'know, we're not reinventing the wheel, per se. There's been amazing music of that [style] come out before – Yothu Yindi really pioneered that with their blend of Yolŋu and contemporary music. What we're doing is playing our own style of music. And that was something we never really thought too hard about. It wasn't like we sat down and went, "Okay, yeah, let's make Yolŋu surf-rock!"

Sometimes up here, you don't have a lot of exposure to pop music. It's just so remote, it's in the bush, and y'know, it's not like we had Spotify – or even radio stations, sometimes. So influences were those family bands – Warumpi Band, Yothu Yindi, all those sort of Darwin swamp-rock bands that my dad was in… I think that influenced us to play that really sort of rock-y, upbeat sort of power-chord driven stuff.

So having the kind of brotherly bond that you do with Yirrŋa, do you feel like you're always on the same wavelength, musically, or know exactly what each other's vibe is?

Yeah! I think it's a really rare thing to be able to collaborate with someone well. As a muso, sometimes collaborations just don't feel right. But for us, it just feels so normal. There's no shame, there's no ego, there's no going, "Oh, we need to this and sound like this." There's absolutely no shits given at all, and no idea is a bad idea. We throw everything up in the air and we talk about every option.

Another part of it is that English is my first language, but Yolŋu isn't, whereas Yolŋu Matha is Yirrŋa's first language and English isn't. So there's ways we can work together in bridging that gap, and there's this natural feeling of vulnerability when we do that. We're all vulnerable – in terms of writing songs in Yolŋu Matha for me, and in writing English songs for the boys. And I think maybe that makes us a bit more open to going, "Let's just try this."

But again, we don't really think about it. The first song we put out, 'Hey Wanhaka', was one that we wrote and recorded. We did it in this little studio that me and Dad had been working on at his place down in Tintenbar – Yothu Yindi were playing at Bluesfest, so the boys were all camped up at the shed, and me and Yirrŋa were just mucking around in the studio. I showed him this idea I had, and we just kind of laid some stuff down and went, "Yeah, this sounds real good." And then we just took a real DIY approach to get the music out there. I did of all our own PR at first, and the hype train came from us just pushing this awesome song. It all just came about from us giving it a crack.

Is that the general process for a Kingray song?

It kind of changes between songs. I'll bring an idea to Yirrŋa and Dima, and we can kind of workshop it from there – or vice versa, they'll bring a song to me. This album also digs up a few old ideas that we had and played as kids. 'Raypirri' is a good example of how the band evolved: Yirrŋa used to play it on guitar, and there's still this image I've got in my mind where we were playing it at the Yirrkala school years ago, as kids – we'd just be mucking around in the music room, and Yirrŋa would get so into it, he'd be up on the table and just rocking it out.

That's always been a cracker song, so when we were putting the album together, we thought, "That really needs to be on there!" And then when we got Lewis [Stiles], the drummer, involved, it became a whole different thing. We had our first gig lined up – it was to support The Chats – and we were like, "Jeez, we need to pull this band together!" So we got our roommate Louie, who plays kit, to rock up one day and learn all the songs – he hadn't even heard them – and the gig was like a day or two later.

He was playing with a punk band called Headlice, and he'd just came off the back of playing a gig with them, so he was still in punk mode. So we played 'Raypirri' first, song, and Louie just clapped it in so fast, we played it like a punk song and just went, "Whoa, this feels awesome!" We even had to dial it down a tad because he just went from zero to 100.

BIG IN BRUNY

FOR HER ULTRA-PERSONAL POST-ALBUM EP, **MADDY JANE** RECONNECTED WITH HER ROOTS IN THE TASMANIAN PARADISE OF BRUNY ISLAND.

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **MATT VIESIS**.

After putting out her full-length debut, *Not All Bad Or Good*, in May 2020, folk-punk luminary Maddy Jane was in dire need of mellowing out. Her sudden rise to stardom clashed with the pressures of a debut album, and it sure didn't help that *Not All Bad Or Good* landed in the midst of the most chaotic time in recent history. So Jane ditched the mainland and headed back home to Bruny Island, a coastal small-town paradise just off the south-eastern coast of Tasmania – an island, off an island, off an island. A good place to escape the malaise of city living, for sure.

Like most of us in mid-2020, though, Jane wasn't exactly able to find her zen. The months that should have been some of her most exciting – those that followed the release of album she'd spent years slaving away on – were instead defined by existential crises, personal dramas and the looming question of whether she'd ever release music again. She kept writing, of course, and wound up penning some of the most intensely personal, soul-baring material she'd ever committed to paper. Naturally, Jane headed straight to the studio.

But while *Island Time* is the product of turbulence and uncertainty, it doesn't feel like it. It feels like the natural next step in Jane's musical trajectory, building on the twang and tang of *Not All Bad Or Good* with its own wallop of flavour. So with the EP out in the wild, Australian Guitar gave Jane a call to get the lowdown on why it's such a crucial instalment in her saga.

In announcing the *Island Time* EP, you said that returning to Bruny Island forced you "to go back to what is truly me and understand what's truly important". What is it that you discovered in that process, and how did you channel that into the record?

It reminded me how much I value modesty and being grounded, remembering to connect with my roots and always come from a really genuine place. I find that all super important, but I think I just forgot to keep myself grounded a little bit. So that was one of the biggest things I worked out.

Do you think it was important for your growth as an artist, especially after putting out your debut album in 2020, to reconnect with your origins and take stock of where you came from?

Yeah, I think that's it. It's such a thing for a muso to do, to kind of freak out after they've released their first album. It's like, "Righto, I've done the first album… Now, what even am I?" All that kind of existential stuff. But coming back home, I think it definitely did just make me go, "It's really not that complicated."

So do you see this EP as the next "chapter" in your journey as an artist – like the follow-up to *Not All Bad Or Good* – or is it more of a detour on the way to your second album?

Yeah, I'm not sure, hey? I mean, not knowing exactly what the next project is, I guess it's hard to say right now. I think it only really becomes clear after all these things come to fruition, and it's like, "Ah, yes, that's what that was." But I think this is a bit of a tangent, for sure. That's why it's an EP. And because I made it in such a weird time as well, I think [the nature of the project] reflects that a little bit. But it means a lot to me, and it's something that I'm really proud of. Y'know, for a time, I was wondering if I was even going to write more music, so to have these songs at all… Yeah, that's pretty relieving as well. If anything, it's got some answers to some of the questions I guess I was asking in my first album.

It definitely is a product of its time.

Yeah. And I think I'm still coming to terms with that now, y'know? [The EP is] just about to come out, and I'm still kind of saying to myself, "It's okay that the world was weird, and therefore the music reflects a weird time that you've gone through." Accepting that was a big thing on its own, and it's all a part of that project as well.

Let's chat gear! Is your go-to guitar still that stunning cherry red Tele?

It is indeed! I'm a very "hold onto one thing and one thing only" kind of musician. Whenever I'm wondering what to do, the sound of my Tele brings me back to that feeling of, "Ah, yes, that's the sound we love." So yeah, the Tele is featured on this EP a lot as well. But I've just recently bought a Stat, too.

Oh shit, dude!

I know. This is huge. It's actually huge for me that I've bought a Strat. So y'know, who knows where the Tele journey will go from here? Especially because I'm so hyper-focused on one thing at a time. Other than the Tele, gear-wise, I think one of the most common things throughout this EP is my personalised overdrive pedal.

I need to know everything, Maddy.

Red Sun Music made it in 2017 when I was on tour with Polish Club. That was all thanks to [frontman David] Novak, he literally called me before we did the soundcheck at the Melbourne show, and he was like, "Hey, you have to get down to the venue now." I was so confused, so I sprinted down there, and they had the Red Sun guys there to make them a pedal. It was kind of Polish Club's doing that I got involved as well. I got to pick all the frequencies out from an overdrive pedal, and they made it into my own little thing that I've used nonstop ever since.

F* yeah, shoutout to Red Sun! Winding it back a bit, though, what drew you to the Strat?**

It was just one of those things – I picked it up, and it was magic. I'm very feel-based, I guess. It was in my friend's secondhand guitar shop – he gets all these cool, fun things in, and it was just on the wall one day, and it was beautiful. And then I played it, and I was just like, "…Yeah." It's really funny though, because it's like twangy Strat, so it's still got that Tele-esque quality to it. I was like, "This is the Maddy Jane strat." It's still got that familiarity to it. And I just love a bit of a twang.

ALL GRINS, NO SPOON

ON HIS "DEBUT" "SOLO" ALBUM, *SOMEBODY ELSE*, **PHIL JAMIESON** EMBRACES POP, NOSTALGIA, AND A CAREFREE SENSE OF YOUTHFULNESS.

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **IAN LAIDLAW.**

It's debatable whether or not *Somebody Else* – the stunning new record of prickly retro pop and punchy rock from Phil Jamieson – is the Grinspoon frontman's debut solo album. He did break out from the Grinners in the mid-2000s to steer The Lost Gospel, but *Somebody Else* is the first to bear his actual name. It's also not entirely a solo album – as Jamieson tells Australian Guitar, producers Oscar Dawson (of Holy Holy) and Davey Lane (of You Am I) served the same role on this record that his bandmates in Grinspoon did on their seven albums, four EPs, so on and so forth.

So it's not Jamieson's first solo record, but it's the first Phil Jamieson record, but it was made a three-piece supergroup... You keeping up?

Whatever the case, *Somebody Else* is fantastic. It retains the big hooks and angsty bite that shot Grinspoon into the spotlight, but mellows them out with a little more groove and pliability, focusing more on catchy melodies and bright, upbeat pop song structures. It's been five years in the making – with a few pauses here and there – and condenses everything that makes Jamieson a great artist into one short and sweet compendium of life-affirming jam material.

Before Jamieson takes it on the road at the end of the month, he shot the shit with Australian Guitar, giving us a firsthand look into the magic behind it.

So this record has been a long time coming. When did you start working on it?

2017 was the first session, then 2019 was the second one, and then obviously the pandemic hit, so we had to hit pause for a little while. The pivot to doing solo stuff was also necessary due to the tyranny of distance, with everyone in Grinspoon being split between three different states. But I was able to do solo stuff during the pandemic – I could go to the Lansdowne and play three shows in one day to 50 people each, and that spun my wheels; it made me feel like I was doing something worth doing. But yeah, it's been gestating for the last five years, I'd say. And then recording with Oscar Dawson and Davey Lane, they were able to formulate a coherent thread through all of my weird ideas. But it's a pretty straightforward guitar-pop record, really – it's not a Harry Styles record.

Why did it take you so long to do a solo project?

Well I did The Lost Gospel in 2005, and that was essentially a solo project – but that was also 17 f***ing years ago. It was just that Grinspoon were – and still are – such an amazing, creative, collaborative force for me to write songs and get them out. It's an amazing format – and y'know, Pat [Davern, guitar] was a great finisher of songs for me. I can be really lazy with songwriting, I'd write the verse and the chorus and be like, "Ah, just do something cool in the start." So the band is great, but I got to a point where I wanted a little bit more creative control.

So the reason it's taken this long is because I'm lazy, and it was necessary because the last three years have been weird, and I had the time to do it. And with the collaborators I found... It feels weird to say, but Oscar and Davey were like my band, in some ways – they were the same kind of collaborative force I have with Grinspoon. But obviously over time, everyone kind of pushed and pulled a bit in Grinners; it was like, "I want to be this band," or, "I want to be that band," and I was just like, "Alright, I'll just do what I want."

I'm digging this '80s new-wave vibe. What led you down that path, sonically?

Well, I love synthesisers. I think the songs called for it, right? Especially songs like 'Trouble' and 'Somebody Else'. It was a little bit of psychedelia, a little bit of '80s new-wave... And then there was 'Kapow!', which has those syncopated beats and the staccato guitars. But what led me down there? I think the songs dictated it more than anything else. I wasn't being led by anything else but the songs.

'Somebody Else' had so many [iterations] – it was a Stones groove, then it was a dream-pop thing, and then we settled on what I thought was, like, early '90s Manchester, but everyone else says sounds like the '80s... But y'know, tom-ay-toes, tom-ah-toes. I'm terrible at looking at my stuff from the outside in. And I had immense help from from Davey and Oscar as well, with their respective sonic palates. Davey's got a great studio in Collingwood, which has all the amazing synthesisers, and Oscar's got some incredible production skills – no shit – so he was able to make it shiny, but also make it nasty as well.

Is there much of a difference in like your writing style between Grinspoon and the solo stuff?

It all falls under the same umbrella, I think. I've written songs for Grinspoon, that they've listened to and been like, "This is f***ing terrible," so those would always end up as Last Gospel stuff. Songwriting, to me, is all the same – I'm terrible at wearing hats for different projects. But I admire that immensely. Like Damon Albarn – whatever he does, between Gorillaz and Blur and everything else, it's so impressive.

And collabs... I don't know really how that stuff works, to be honest. I find them fairly terrifying. Chris Cheney just wrote a song for Vika and Linda Bull, which I found amazing – that would have been incredibly intimidating, to be honest, because they're just incredible singers. But yeah, the song will be what it'll be, and I don't really know how to figure out what project it's for until it's already kind of fermented.

What guitars did you play on for this record?

I used my Hagstrom Viking Deluxe, which I use live solo. I also used a Fender Telecaster, which Patrick bought for me many moons ago – thank you, Pat. The bass guitar was a Fender Precision, and then we had a plethora of amplifiers out at Oscar's studio in the Dandenong Ranges – I have no idea what they were, but they sounded good.

I like my guitars to be really simple, and I like them to not break. I've had that Hagstrom for like 15, 16 years now, and it's never had a problem. It looks good, too, and because it's a hollowbody, I can really dig in on it. I'm not going to say that I play hard, but because I grew up with an acoustic guitar, I tend to have an attacking style, I think, which doesn't always work on solidbody guitars. And it sounds pretty good, too.

What about your arsenal of effects? Are you a big pedal guy?

No, I find them really difficult – especially live. When I play solo, I'm concentrating on singing and playing at the same time, and if I've got to do too much tap dancing on the pedals, my skill set starts to fall apart. So I try to make it as simple as possible. But Davey got me on to the Strymon Iridium, which is an amp simulator. I don't use an amp anymore – that does my AC30 sound, and it's been great.

I do have a fuzz octave pedal, too, which I use for the chorus on 'Trouble'. And then the other thing I've got is a little tremolo situation – I forget what brand it is. And then I've got a loop pedal, but I only use that when I'm playing completely on my own. And I only use it for the last song, because I'm not the best at doing looping... And I hate it [laughs].

KICKING GOALS

SOCCER MOMMY PEERS BACK THE CURTAIN ON HER MOST AMBITIOUS ALBUM YET: *SOMETIMES, FOREVER.*

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **SOPHIE HUR**.

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The first two Soccer Mommy albums, 2018's *Clean* and 2020's *Color Theory*, drew inspiration from the emo and pop-rock greats of the mid '90s through to the early '00s. But in her fierce determination to keep reinventing herself, Sophie Allison skipped over the '10s and the present day entirely, setting LP3 somewhere in the very distant future. *Sometimes, Forever* is an experimental and ambitious record, ebbing and flowing from cruisy pop jams to gothic alt-rock sizzlers. Like its title suggests, it's a record defined by contrasts, where Allison leaps from one extreme to the next and has a damn blast doing it.

Flanked by her live band and producer Daniel Lopatin (better known by the moniker Oneohtrix Point Never), Allison set about making *Sometimes, Forever* in a defiantly natural way – though it saw them experiment freely with synths and convoluted song structures, the band recorded most of the album live in the room, allowing it to blossom with a personality that would have been impossible to whip up in a program. It's unmistakably Soccer Mommy, but in such a way that Allison's evolution is palpable: she's no longer the new kid on a sprawling block of indie-rock greats that blazed the trails ahead of her, but a great of her own creation, blazing trails for herself and herself alone (well, herself and her bandmates).

Australian Guitar hopped on the phone with Allison to learn more about how she endeavoured to create her most enthralling Soccer Mommy album.

This album hits a really striking balance between the melancholic and the magical – you've got those super dark and experimental songs like 'Unholy Affliction' and 'Darkness Forever', but then those huge pop anthems like 'Shotgun' and 'Feel It All The Time'. Was that duality a big part of the concept?

Oh yeah, definitely. I wanted there to be this mix of evil and light and, y'know? With a song like 'Feel It All The Time', for example, when that chorus comes in, it makes you want to wave your hand out the window of your car. I want to express those feelings of being so down and wondering, like, "Am I gonna make it through life? I can't even make it as far as this truck can go." But then that sense of relief you get when you let it all go, y'know?

The tonal palette on this album, too, is just f*ing insane. What was it like to have that much bigger sonic sandbox to play in?**

Oh, my God, I was so excited. That's exactly what I wanted from the start – I wanted it to feel like these songs were being played by a band that had all this mysticism around it. Like that magical feeling you get when you play in a small, old theatre with insane acoustics, and there's just this eeriness and this magic to everything. All of the synth sounds we used, they weren't just the classic "indie synth" type of sounds – not that that's what we did in the past, either, but I just wanted this album to have that magical, fantasy kind of feel to it.

Dan[iel Lopatin, producer] did a really good job of capturing that stuff. I remember he was playing something for 'Newdemo', right when we were recording it – we had just done the guitar and vocals, and he was playing this melody line on a MIDI keyboard, just over the chorus, and I was like, "That sounds like something you'd hear at the end of a Studio Ghibli movie." It had this sense of childlike fantasy about it, and it was just so amazing.

Is it more gratifying for you as a guitar player, too, when you've got these structures that aren't your typical "indie-rock song structure" to play in?

I don't know, but that's an interesting thought. I think with the way that songs like 'Bones' or 'Shotgun' were done, I almost think it's kind of good to be laidback. Those songs have some of my favorite guitar moments, I would say. Julien [Powell], the guitarist in my band, he's usually the one that brings in a lot of the experimental stuff, but he also had some of the most amazing, just completely clean riffs going on in a lot of the songs. I think that contrast was really cool – having that mixture of experimental and strange, glitchy, ambient, washy synth parts, but with this clean, almost like George Harrison-sounding guitar stuff over it.

Were you recording much of the album live over those synths?

Yeah, but the other way around – we were tracking all the instruments live, and then we'd add the synths and whatnot on it later, after we had all the basic tracks down. It felt very much like the way we play it live, just having the whole band in a room together and working out the songs, trying to get the vibe right for the take.

I remember when we were doing 'Darkness Forever', Dan came in and burned sage, and then turned off like all the lights so it was pitch black – and by the time we got the tape, we had to go outside because it was two o'clock in the afternoon but we'd in the darkness for hours. and it had been in like the pitch black for hours. But that was all in the spirit of getting that live band feeling, and making it feel as natural as we could. We didn't want to have to do a lot of chopping up – a little's fine, obviously, but we wanted at least one take that felt like, y'know, "the one".

After the emotional journey that this album takes you on, 'Still' really is the perfect closing track – it feels like reprieve, but the kind of reprieve where you just sit there stunned, like, "Goddamn, what just happened!?" When you wrote that song, was it obvious that it would be the last track on the record?

Yes! And that was the first song I wrote for the album – which is very strange, but I feel like on every record, I always know what the last song is going to be. I hadn't written any other songs and I didn't have an idea of what the album would sound like, but it felt like an ending track.

Did that sort of like ground the record, like, "All the other tracks have to lead to this point"?

In a sense? I just kind of do whatever when I'm writing, but I remember also thinking that 'Bones' should be the first track. It's helpful to have those goalposts when you're creating a tracklist, because then you can kind of build the flow from one song to the next. I always picture it in halves – y'know, like side A and side B, even though most people are just listening to it on Spotify.

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

ON THEIR SUMMERY SECOND ALBUM, **SPACEY JANE** PRESERVE THEIR YOUTHFULNESS WITH GOOD VIBES AND EVEN BETTER TUNES. WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **MICHAEL TARTAGLIA.**

Like all of the states detached from the big three on the east coast, Western Australia has an incredible local music scene that's often ignored by the rest of the country. It can be hard for bands to break out of that bubble, and when they do, it's usually because they've turned heads with some big, left-field pop record that commands your undivided attention. But in the vicious throes of mid-2020, Australia needed something a little more chilled-out, homely and lowkey. Armed with their honeyed, sun-kissed indie-rock jams, Freo four-piece Spacey Jane ticked all those boxes and then some.

Their debut album, *Sunlight*, was an immediate smash-hit, peaking at #2 on the ARIA Charts and spawning six duly acclaimed singles – including the inescapable 'Booster Seat', which slid in at #2 on last year's Triple J Hottest 100 (but absolutely deserved #1) and will no doubt be a staple of every setlist Spacey Jane ever scribble up. It was a youthful album both in sound and concept, so it stands to reason that its follow-up, *Here Comes Everybody*, would be about a time in which most would shed their youthfulness – but endeavouring to hold on to it nonetheless.

When announcing the record, frontman Caleb Harper said: "I want this record to be for youth persevering and thriving emotionally under the weight of our generational burden made up of climate change, [the COVID-19 pandemic], etc. Feeling like you have the responsibility of your entire future on your shoulders without any say in what happens creates anxiety and uncertainty. I think COVID took away the sense of unity that gives young people assurances in such times. I know music isn't a replacement for taking control and galvanising positive change, but I hope this record can soundtrack some of those moments in people's lives."

To dive a little more into how Spacey Jane turned that concept into a reality, Australian Guitar caught up with lead guitarist Ashton Hardman-LeCornu.

So if *Sunlight* was a showcase of what Spacey Jane could do in a full-length format, how does *Here Comes Everybody* kick things up to the next level?

I think we wanted to be more intentional with our songwriting. The way we'd done things with our first couple of EPs, we'd been gigging like crazy and writing songs in-between the shows, and we'd introduce them into the set as we went. And we were just sort of collecting those songs and going, "Okay, we've got about five or six of these now, let's put them out." And the album happened as an extension of that format, where we were gigging for years, and then we just had these songs piling up – it was just that we had more of them this time. And it was a slower process – we had songs from years ago, but also songs that we'd written days before we recorded them.

This album was a lot more intentional; we actually said, "Let's write an album." It was still done in batches, but we always knew that the songs we were writing, we were writing them for this album. We didn't really know what we were writing for with Sunlight, we were kind of just writing songs.

So Caleb said the record was about "youth persevering and thriving emotionally under the weight of our generational burden". Is there a catharsis that comes from spinning a rough time into a happy song?

Yeah, I think happiness can be a form of rebellion when there's a lot of shit going on that isn't very happy. The album does feel like a triumph, in a way, because we worked on it through COVID and fought so many obstacles to get it done. I feel proud of it for us, because we had to jump through a lot of hoops to make this album happen. Thematically... Caleb is probably more inclined to speak on that, I don't want to speak for him – but I will say that I often feel like he writes for all of us when he writes his lyrics, because we have a special relationship with each other. I can listen to him sing and know what he's singing about. He references these moments that, even if they have nothing to do with us, feel like they're a part of all of our lives, in a really special way.

I feel like all of these songs are tailor-made to be jammed out at those big, sunny summer festivals. Do you typically have the live show in mind when you're writing a song?

Yeah, I think that came to us naturally. As our trajectory went upwards, the types of gigs that we were playing started to influence the way we thought about writing. Instead of just writing songs to play in a club or a small tent at a festival, we started thinking about those bigger stages and theatres, and just thinking about those live moments. But we also just got better at making music. Those were moments that we were always trying to have, but we didn't stick the landing because we hadn't yet had those moments.

So as a guitarist, what did you want to hone in on for this record?

There is a lot to be said for doing everything in moderation, and the power of being reserved with your playing. I think when we first started, I used to just throw everything into a song, and always tried to write parts for every piece of the song – and I still do that, but I recognise where it counts and where it's a waste of time. We think more holistically about our songs, rather than what each of us is doing. It's important to give everyone their space, and create parts that add to the overall song, rather than try to dominate it. I think I learned a lot about that during this record – just working in harmony with everybody.

You and Caleb moved to Brisbane to work on this record with Konstantin. What was it like to really eat, sleep and breathe this record?

It was like mine and Caleb's honeymoon [laughs]. When we first started working on the album, we recorded at a place called Poons Head. We were there with this guy Rob [Grant], who's a legend – he's got all these amazing stories – and he lives in this studio. It's this 100-year-old house that he's slowly turned into a studio, you rock up there at 12, and him and his dog Barney will either be just getting back from the beach, or just getting out of bed. And you basically go non-stop from 12pm to an unspecified time in the middle of the night – often around 3am. We had a lot of nights at Poons where we would be there till three or four, either listening to one of Rob's stories or just going crazy over a part, rabbit-holing on a tone or some kind of creative element of the song.

Caleb was in Freo [where Poons Head Studio is] and I was living in Nedlands, which is like a 20 minute drive away, so I would go back to Caleb's house and we would sleep in the same bed together, and then get up in the morning, go get my guitar, and then get back into the studio. And that Brisbane trip was like the ultimate version of that process. We were there for like two months, and we really did live and breathe it. We also became such great friends with Konstantin. We'd get up every day and look forward to going into studio, hanging out and making music. The schedule was also a bit more manageable than it was at Poons – this was more like 10am to 6pm-ish.

TICK, TICK, SWOON

WHEN IT FELT LIKE THE WORLD HAD SLOWED TO A HALT, **VANCE JOY** TOOK ADVANTAGE OF IT AND SPENT THE TIME MAKING AN ALBUM ABOUT… WELL, TIME.

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **WILL MORRISSEY**.

It's no surprise that Vance Joy is one of the most laidback dudes in music – the man's entire catalogue is tailor-made to be listened to from a hammock on the beach in the middle of summer. So when the pandemic hit, Joy (real name James Keogh) wasn't too fazed about losing the backbone of his artistry, his penchant for piquant collaborations. After initially wanting to enjoy some well-earned R&R, the Melbourne indie-folkster headed to Zoom, where he and a cohort of co-writers cooked up 12 of his warmest and most wonderful tunes yet.

Those are compiled into Joy's third studio album, *In Our Own Sweet Time* – an album, fittingly, about the concept of timelessness. As Joy said in announcing it: "I'm always drawn to the idea of timelessness or that shared moment that takes you out of the chaos outside. If the world is crazy, you can retreat somewhere. It's always hard to think of the right title but I think that sums up the album perfectly."

Later this year, Joy will take the record to stages all across Australia, playing in a dozen cities between September and November. Before he knuckles down on the rehearsals for that run, Joy took some out to chat about his new record with Australian Guitar.

How does it feel to have the record out there in the world?

It's been a long time coming. I wrote 'Don't Fade' in 2019 – maybe that September? – so it's been almost three years since I started writing songs for this album. But obviously, 2020 and 2021, a lot of those songs were written over Zoom because I wasn't able to travel. But that was kind of cool – I was living in Barcelona, and it was a nice little pause. I enjoyed not having to travel so much. So yeah, it feels good! Some of these songs have been around for a long time, so I'm, glad they're finally out there. And now it's like, "Okay, it's time for a new phase now! Where are these new songs hiding?"

How did you find that your songwriting style translated to the Zoom process? Was it something you had to adapt to?

Yeah, definitely. But it was, surprisingly, not that difficult. That's once I actually gave it a go – when the idea came up and I heard that people were doing it, I was like, "Ahhh, I don't know, can't we just chill? Let's just enjoy this time, we don't have to be pushing ourselves all the time." But ultimately, y'know, songwriting is fun and collaborating with someone can be really fun. You always get something out of it – even if you don't write a great song, you still have an enjoyable experience. I found it was quite easy with my friend Dave [Bassett], because we have a bit of a rapport already and we'd already worked together a bunch.

It was actually quite surprising. Rarely would we sit together and make things up in the exact moment we start working – he'll play something, I'll sing something, and we'll just follow that path until something sticks – and y'know, maybe there's a bit of that energy that gets lost in the Zoom. But we still managed to write songs, and the little fountain of creativity that we have, it was still trickling away. It's always there if you want to tap into it, you've just got to know how.

I know that on paper, it doesn't sound very inspiring to be sitting at home, watching reruns on TV and doing an online grocery shop – y'know, the activities weren't necessarily as inspiring as going on tour in a new country and seeing the world, and all that – but the songs also didn't lose that much of that creativity. I was in a hotel, quarantining for a couple of weeks, but we were writing a song about living in Spain. It was like a funny juxtaposition.

Did it push you to be more creative with your storytelling, or think a little more outside the box?

I think so. A lot of the songs on this album were inspired by my own experiences, but sometimes when I'm writing a song, I imagine like a very specific setting, and it can be totally made up – it's probably just some amalgamation of movies or books or whatever that I've engaged with. I just close my eyes and see a location – I can see a little world, and I'll start writing within that world. And it's cool when that happens. It happened a couple of times on this album. 'Every Side Of You', for example, I was thinking of the nighttime and the beach, silhouettes and the sun setting... There was a world that I made up for that song. And that happens with most of the songs. It's like reading a book – the words are there, and your brain starts to fill in the colours and the rest of the picture.

What guitars were you strumming up a storm on for this record?

I've got a Martin, a couple of Gibsons, and an old Maton which has kind of been my number one guitar since the start [of my career]. I still play a couple of songs on that. but I play it in Drop D now – the Maton in Drop D sounds really cool. And then this Martin is filled with cotton balls because it was feeding back whenever we'd plug it in, so it's like super heavy, but it's the best guitar in the world to play live. Because I play fingerpicking and strumming, and this is the only guitar that really sounds perfect in both of those styles. And then my ukuleles, I just play a little Kala – I don't know if that fits into the guitar world, but I still play the same Kala that I bought on Johnson Street in Melbourne the day before I recorded 'Riptide'. it's not the most top-of-the-line one, but it has a really nice resonance – that $300 uke is still the best uke I've ever played.

What is it about the Martin that's made it take over the Maton as your go-to?

I mean, I love playing the Maton, and it still has the most character. I still love the way it plays – I've worn the neck in quite a bit, so the wood is kind of smoothed down and it just looks cooler. It's also got a couple of cracks in it, which makes it look cool. It just sounds the best in a Drop D tuning, and I play four songs in Drop D at the moment, so we moved [the Maton] over to there. And then the Martin... That was kind of a recent discovery, courtesy of my sound guy. Because I kind of start out picking, and then when I strum, I slam really hard. And in those transitions, the sound is kind of like, not there, and then it's really there. The Martin just rides those peaks and troughs. I just wish it was a bit lighter.

FIERCE. FEARLESS. FREE.

ON THEIR SECOND ALBUM, *AT LEAST I'M FREE*, **WAAX** THROW CAUTION TO THE WIND AND EMBRACE CALAMITY.

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **JAMES CASWELL.**

Luck's never really been on WAAX's side – their early years were fraught with lineup dramas and stylistic clashes, which carried on right into the lead-up to the release of their debut album, 2019's *Big Grief*. Hell, just a few months before they released it, their lead guitarist and co-songwriter was ousted on bad terms, and his replacement – underground Brisbane pop-rock legend James "Flames" Gatling – was thrown into the Mariana Trench of deep ends, having to learn their entire discography right before they jetted off for a North American tour. Then, right when they planned to tour *Big Grief*, WAAX were knocked on their collective ass by COVID-19.

Any other band would've thrown in the towel then and there – but then again, WAAX aren't any other band. Led by the inimitable powerhouse that is frontwoman Marie "Maz" DeVita, the band knuckled down on writing for the follow-up to *Big Grief*, with the MO being to create a truly unhinged rollercoaster of emotions and tones, where the only rule was that there were no rules. Gatling became DeVita's new writing partner, and having played in approximately 9,381 bands before WAAX, he came with an encyclopaedic knowledge of pop music in tow. The end result of their hustle is the band's most exciting and unpredictable body of work yet, *At Least I'm Free*.

The album saw WAAX return to the La Cueva studio in Byron Bay, where they reunited with producing duo Bernard Fanning (yes, that Bernard Fanning) and Nick DiDia – but *At Least I'm Free* is less of a sequel to *Big Grief* than it is the debut album of a completely reinvented and revitalised iteration of WAAX. To learn more about it, Australian Guitar caught up with Gatling and longstanding rhythm guitarist Ewan Birtwell.

Before joining WAAX, you played in a bunch of underground Brisbane indie-rock bands. How does all of that experience inform what you bring to the table here?

Gatling: The best thing about being in so many bands is that it's made adapting to different things really easy. With a lot of those bands, people were just like, "Can you play bass for me at this gig?" And then I'd play in that band for that gig, and they'd be like, "Oh, actually, can you play bass for me at every gig?" The difference with WAAX is that I got thrown into a situation where they were like, "Hey, can you learn a full set in half an hour?" And I was like, "Uhhhhh… I guess so?"

But when we actually got together… I thought it was going to be a rehearsal on a Thursday night – Maz messaged me and she was like, "Can you come to the studio and meet us?" And I was like, "Yeah, sure," and I got there, and we ended up just drinking lots of beers and hanging out. And they were like, "Okay, Saturday morning, we have rehearsal," so I went home and learnt every song that they had out on Spotify. And I think that helped. I don't think I've ever been super crash-hot at guitar, but I'm definitely good at learning things quickly.

There is a lot of stuff on this album that feels like a step away from *Big Grief* – that sort of Pixies-ish, almost Weezer-y noodling on 'Man Like Me', for example. Where did that vibe come from?

Birtwell: I think for James and I, working on guitar parts is its own kind of thing. He and and Maz work on getting a song structure together, and then we'll take some time apart to just kind of sit with the song, and then we'll bounce ideas back and forth with each other for ages, just to see what sticks. And eventually something will, and it's like, "Okay, that's cool, let's roll with that." And then as the recording process goes on, it either sticks through the whole process, or it doesn't.

Gatling: I think oftentimes, you'll hear a song and you'll be like, "Oh, I like that song… Okay, how can I make that song into my song without getting sued?

Birtwell: We also spent a lot of time just sitting down and bouncing random shit off each other. We'd get past the songs we'd work on in a session, and then I'd go 'round to James' place and we'd sit on his balcony, or he'd come to my place, and we'd just talk for like a while – there wouldn't necessarily be any goal with it, we'd just kind of chat and noodle away and just play to each other for a bit. And something would always come out of that – it might just be one line, but it always ends up being what makes the song.

Gatling: I'd also never really been into heavy music. I wasn't a heavy music guy until, like, five years ago. And so I think a lot of the instrumental stuff is actually drifting away from being the really, really heavy WAAX of old. It definitely dips back into it – and probably even deeper than than any other WAAX record… 'Jeff On The Streets', for example, the end of that song is thrashy and gross and discordant – it kind of sounds awful, but in this amazing way. But it also starts with a spy riff, like this Pink Panther-esque bullshit.

That song in particular is such a fucking journey.

Gatling: With that one, we were listening to lots of Foals. The bridge needed to be like 'Inhaler', you know, where it's like, "Can't get enough space – downg, downg, downg!" And you think it can't get any bigger, but then it gets bigger, and you're like, "Oh my God, they've done it again!"

Especially going back to Bernie and Nick as well, did you feel more confident to shake things up a little more?

Birtwell: I think so. I think having worked with them [on *Big Grief*], we definitely got a sense of how they worked, and vice versa, so this time around, there was a bit more of that trust and a bit more willingness to push backwards and forwards on things. Like James would have an idea to try something guitar-wise, or Maz would have a vocal harmony or something, and I think they were a bit more willing to be like, "Okay, let's see where this could go…"

Gatling: It's interesting, because I obviously wasn't there for the first album, but when I came in, it just felt like seeing like an uncle or something. It felt like the band was just going home for Christmas, it was great. They would kind of bag you out if you did something stupid or played a part sloppily – they'd just be like, "Come on Ewan, that wasn't your best."

Birtwell: I think that relationship developed really quickly on the first album, so it was a really natural decision to do the second one with them as well. Because yeah, like James said, there was that kind of fatherly energy. And then this time around, they let us be a little freer to make our own mistakes.

James: That's literally what Nick DiDia said to me said every single time. I'd be like, "Does that sound good?" And he'd go, "Whatever, man, it's your record." And I'd be like, "…But does it sound good!? I know it's my record, but does it sound good!?"

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

ON HER EQUALLY PROPULSIVE AND POIGNANT DEBUT ALBUM, ***JAGUAR JONZE*** SENDS HER TROUBLED PAST UP IN FLAMES AND BLAZES A BOLD TRAIL FOR HER FUTURE TO SHINE ON.

WORDS BY **ELLIE ROBINSON**. PHOTO BY **SHE IS APHRODITE.**

Pandemic be damned, the last two-and-a-half years have been incredibly hectic for Deena Lynch, better known today as the inimitable Jaguar Jonze. She dropped her debut EP under the moniker, Diamonds & Liquid Gold, in April 2020 – midway through her own perilous battle with COVID-19, no less – and by the year's end, the Brisbanite had firmly established herself as one of Australia's most powerful creative forces.

Splitting her time evenly between music, her activism for survivors of abuse and marginalised communities, and her various other creative endeavours (ie. digital art as Spectator Jonze and photography as Dusky Jonze), Lynch powered into 2021 with the Antihero era. Fleshing out the world of Jaguar Jonze with a commanding swagger and a fearless bite, it was arguably one of the best releases in a year packed from start to end with bangers. It raised a question we were desperate to see answered: "What could this woman do with the freedom of a whole album?"

Enter: *Bunny Mode*, an 11-track eruption of passion, power and personality. It chronicles the first stint of Lynch's journey as Jaguar Jonze, but also looks further inwards, reckoning with demons she fought in her youth to regain control of her labyrinthine psyche, and making it impenetrably clear that new demons will have their heads torn clean off their shoulders if they dare to even think of striking.

With the record out and dropping jaws all around the world, Australian Guitar caught up with Lynch to vibe on everything that makes *Bunny Mode* such a striking listen, and how even the instruments that went into making it were a labour of love.

In the Spotlight column you did for us in AG #147, you said: "I'm self-taught and use guitar as a vehicle for singing, songwriting and expression so I only ever learn what I need to do at a minimum." With this album in particular, what new techniques did you bring to the table?

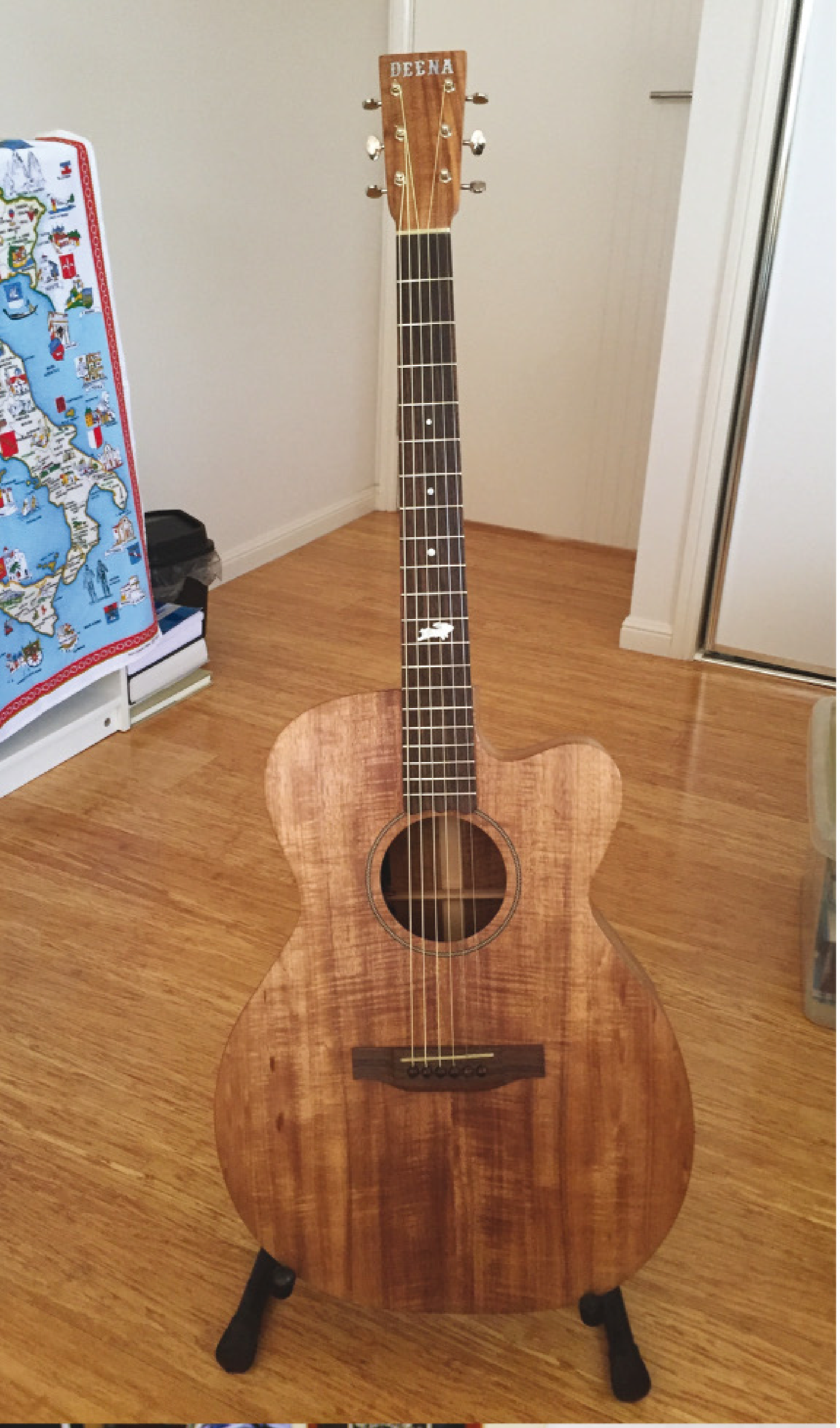
I think you can really see that [my approach to] the guitar has evolved on this album. I've come to realise that my music is so heavily weighted on vocals, but also on the guitar parts. Because the guitar, to me, is like a second set of vocals. I use my vocals as an instrument and as part of the arrangement, but in the same sense, I love my guitar to take the same kind of presence that a lead vocal would over a bed of other tracks.

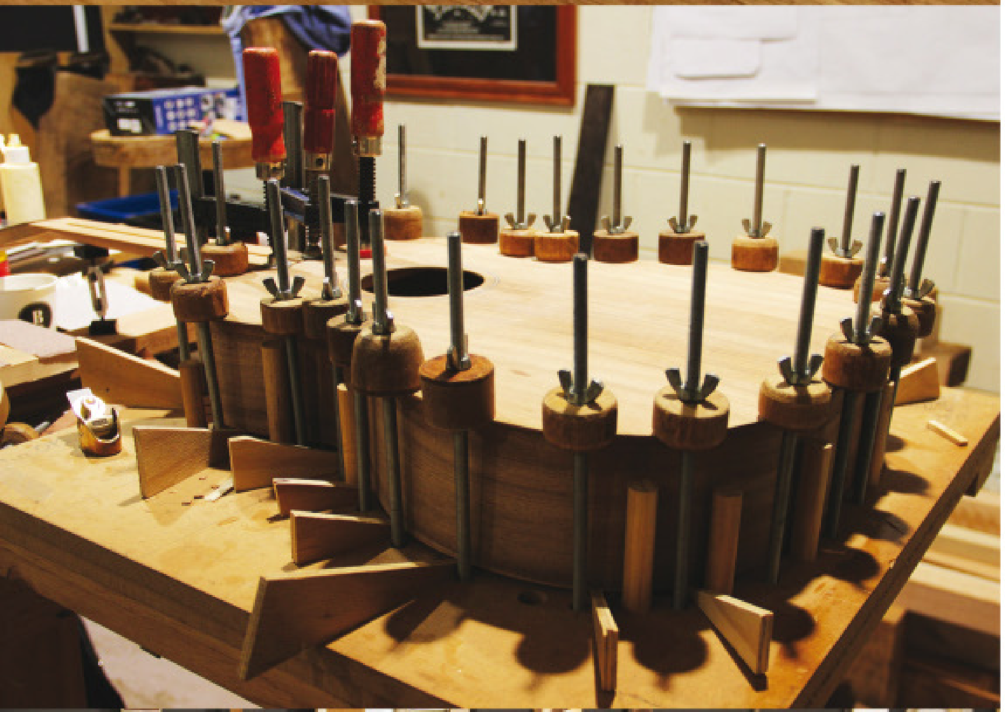
So with *Bunny Mode*, I wanted to push that. I think we were trying to be more annoying with the guitar sometimes, to be honest – like, we wanted it to be chaotic and confronting, really take up space and grab your attention. It had to be ear-piercing, but it also had to be buttery and beautiful, because I wanted to show the breath of the guitar; I wanted to show that it can be used like a vocal.

Even when the guitar is used minimally, there's a lot of force there. Like on 'Know My Name', where at times, there'll just be one note ringing out, but it feels so impactful.

Yes! Thank you! I am really annoying in the studio – the theme of this interview is that I am annoying [laughs] – but I always talk about conviction and intention, like, "Does this [part] need to be here? What purpose is this serving?" And that's why you hear, in a lot of my tracks, the lead guitar is shredding to three notes, or the same note in a two-bar setting, and it says so much more than a big shredding part would.

It also allows for us sit in that atmosphere a little bit longer, and really let it take effect. I like that you brought up 'Know My Name', too, because that was one where I was being really intentional with





the guitar. It's like, I'm being very commanding with my lyrics, and I want to let the guitar just be a facilitator in that conversation.

That's something where your influence from film soundtracks comes into play, right?

Yeah, definitely. I think film scores are meant to evoke emotion – they exist to suit the scene. And that's what I want with the guitars, to suit the scene of the story I'm trying to tell, or amplify the message I'm trying to convey. I love that composers are really considered with the way they arrange tracks and write film scores, and I am really inspired by that as well.

As for the guitars themselves, what can you tell me about Dingo?

Okay, so I made this guitar from scratch, and I intentionally wanted everything to be from Queensland. The body is made from Queensland blackwood, and it's so beautiful. And I didn't want to put any resin or lacquer or anything on it, so I've just gone with pumice and beeswax – it's like a very natural, matte-satin finish. The fretboard is rosewood, and then the frets are made from the bones of cows that died naturally in farms.

And then the inlays – one of them is a little bunny rabbit, because I used to have a pet rabbit, and she was my best friend, so she lives up on the 12th fret. And the headstock has "DEENA" written out in mother-of-pearl. But the thing is, I flat-out refused to use CNC lasers – I wanted everything on this guitar to be done by hand, so I literally filed each letter out and drilled it into the bed of the wood myself… I'll never make a guitar again, it was so laborious [laughs]. It has all these little imperfections, but I actually love that. I'm very much an imperfectionist's perfectionist.

Is it more gratifying to you, coming up with a hook or writing a song on a guitar that you put your blood, sweat and tears into?

Absolutely! I have never played that guitar live, because I am so adamant that if I was to play it onstage, I would need a strap, and I have to make that strap by hand as well. But every song I've ever made has been written on that guitar. For me, Dingo is this device that allows me to be 100 percent grounded and present, because it's something I poured so much of myself into – and that gets carried on through to my songwriting.

It's like this weird spiritual connection I have, where it allows me to go deep into my emotions and my soul, and what's important to me, and let that come through in my songwriting… And then I guess I'm probably a creature of habit as well.

Was Dingo the first guitar you'd ever built?

First and last [laughs]. It was a full-time job for two weeks, but I didn't get it done in those two weeks, so then it was every weekend for the following three months. It was strenuous, but it was an amazing process because I learned so much about the guitar. It's such a beautiful craftsmanship – I have so much more respect for luthiers around the world, and what they do. And not only luthiers, too, but guitar techs as well. My partner is a guitar tech, and I appreciate so much more of what he does on the job, which I probably didn't take note of before or just always took for granted.

There is such a beautiful art form behind the woodwork and the building of guitars. Even the electronic side of it! But yeah, it's definitely not for me with my level of patience [laughs]. I actually have this other really cool guitar that someone made for me, which I got sent from a luthier in Austria. He'd just had taken note of who I was as an artist, and thought it fit the attitude of Jaguar Jonze, and he totally nailed it. It's beautiful. And it's made from recycled skateboards! I've been very blessed to have all of this amazing artistry around me, in every facet of my music and career.

Long before you even start thinking about the music, there's so much artistry and creativity involved.

Totally. Even putting together a pedalboard is an art form of its own. I've tried making my own pedals, too – that is also not for me [laughs]. But the reason I try making all of these things is so I can understand where it comes from. I think it's really important to see where everything sits in the grand scheme of things – I don't want to dissociate, or be disconnected or detached, from where my art comes from. I always try to be grateful for everything in front of me, and never take anything for granted – like the guitar I play on or the pedals I play it through.

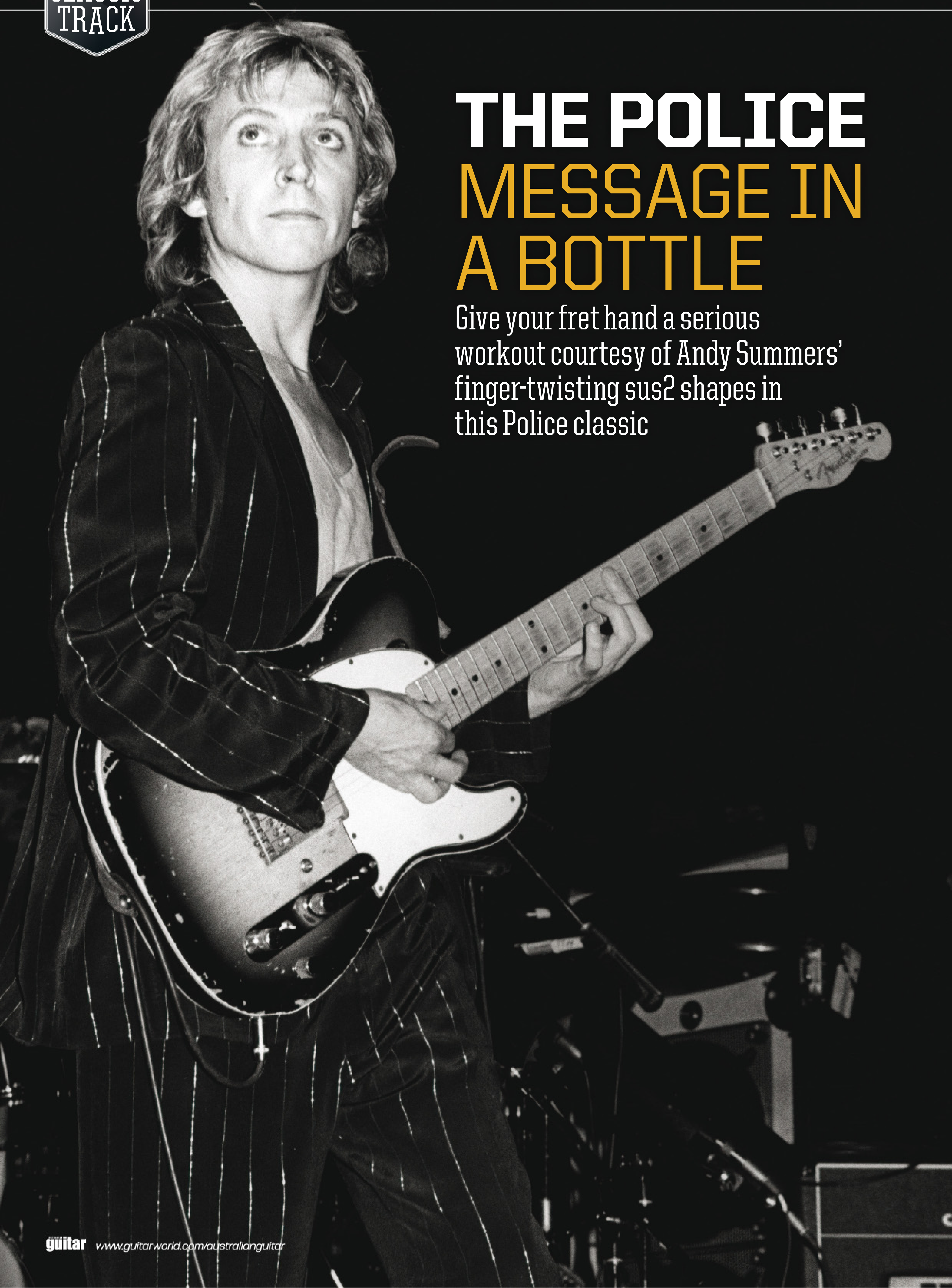
Tell me about the pedals you've made!

One of them is still on my board! I didn't really grow up with my dad, but when I found and reconnected with him when I was 18, I found out that he was also an engineer. He lives in Japan, and Akihabara – the "electric town" – is his favorite place in the world. His kitchen looks like a Jaycar: there's plastic tubs of electronics everywhere, and all these random gadgets sprawled out over every surface. So the first time I built a pedal was with him, and it was a really great bonding experience. We built a digital delay. I tried to do another one on my own, which was an eight-bit fuzz, but that's broken now.

THE POLICE

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

Give your fret hand a serious workout courtesy of Andy Summers' finger-twisting sus2 shapes in this Police classic



Bursting onto the scene in the late 70s, The Police's highly distinctive and original post-punk, reggae-tinged blend of pop and rock placed them at the very cutting edge of the new wave movement.

The most demanding aspect of this opener from 1979's *Regatta De Blanc* album is the reach required to fret guitarist Andy summers' signature sus2 chord shapes. In particular, F#sus2 is quite the finger-stretcher as it falls low down on the fretboard where the frets are farthest apart.

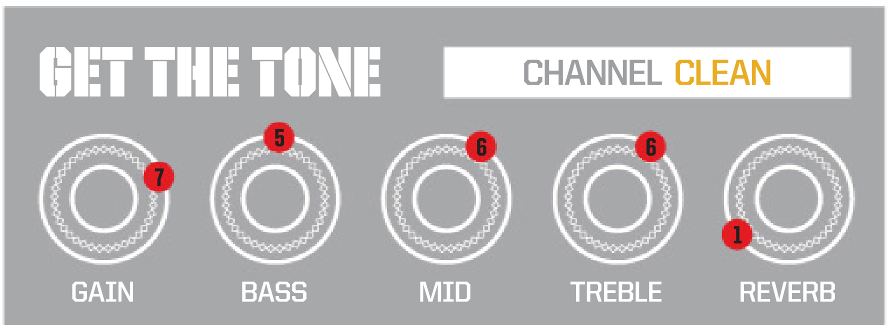
The sequence contains no open strings, however, so you could easily practise the piece higher up the neck to gradually build your stretching ability.

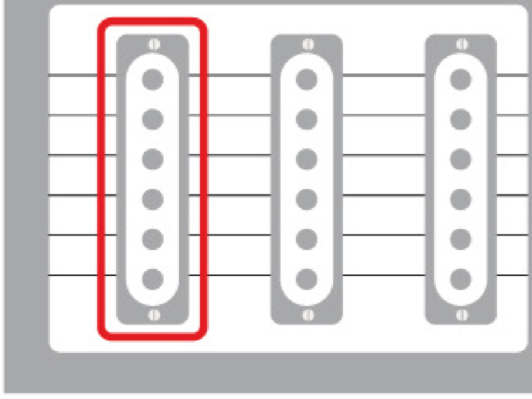
For example, try starting at the 7th fret so your first chord would be Esus2, followed by Csus2 (8th fret), Dsus2 (10th fret) and Asus2 (5th fret). Take it easy and don't stretch too hard, though – increasing your reach takes time and you'd be wise to take a break if you feel any discomfort.

GET THE SOUND

Everything you need to know before playing 'Message In A Bottle'

GET THE TONE





You'll get the most authentic sound if you select a bridge position single-coil pickup, preferably on a Telecaster.

EFFECTS

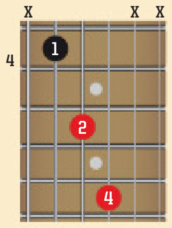
Flanger: Manual: 3, Depth: 5, Rate: 2, Res: 5, **Compression:** Attack: 7, Sustain: 2

Summers was a one-guitar man in the early days, playing a 1963 Telecaster that had been modded with a Gibson PAF neck humbucker, an out of phase switch and a built-in preamp – though it's the bridge single-coil pickup he favoured for *Message In A Bottle*. He used an Electro Harmonix Electric Mistress flanger originally, but, assuming you don't have one too, it's worth experimenting with a chorus pedal to try and recreate the song's watery shimmer. A dash of compression will help too.

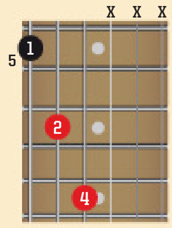
Amp-wise, Summers told TG he doesn't recall what he used in the studio, but Marshall 1959 Super Lead heads and Marshall cabs appeared in his live rig.

CHORDS

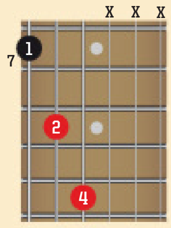
There's no getting away from it – the chords in *Message In A Bottle* are quite the challenge. Start by practising the sus2 shapes. They're all the same shape; they just start in different positions on the fretboard. Develop your stretch by practising the shapes higher up the neck, moving down to lower positions as you start to get comfortable. Once the shapes start to feel familiar try practising the changes.



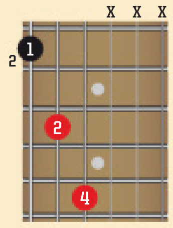
C#sus2



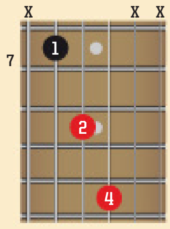
Asus2



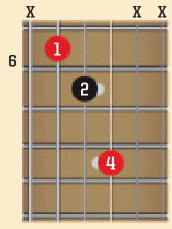
Bsus2



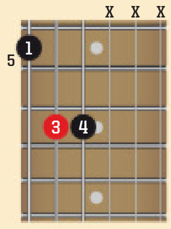
F#sus2



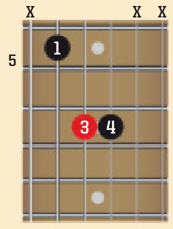
Esus2



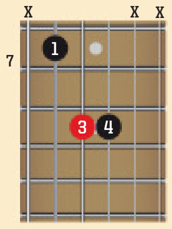
A5/D#



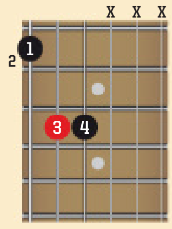
A5



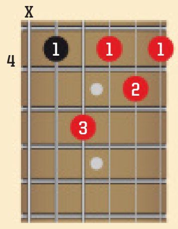
D5



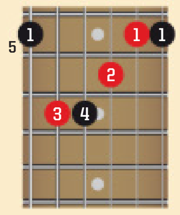
E5



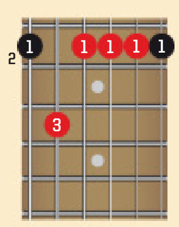
F#5



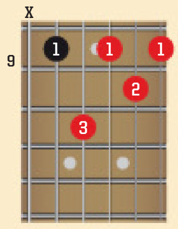
C#m7



A



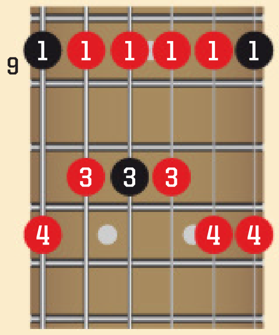
F#m7



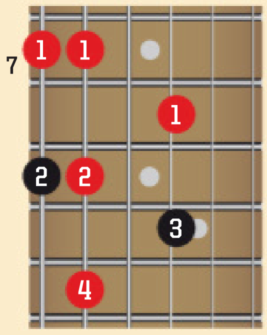
F#m7

SCALES

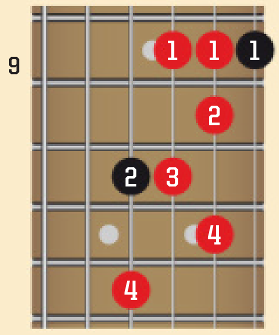
Andy's lead playing is expressive, but tight and accurate. Nearly everything he plays in *Message In A Bottle* is based around shape 1 of the C# minor pentatonic scale, with just brief moments in the other shapes shown here. Practise the scale shapes before trying out the tab to get a feel for how Summers puts his lead ideas together.



C# minor pentatonic scale



C# minor pentatonic scale



C# natural minor scale

THE POLICE
MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE
Music and lyrics by Sting
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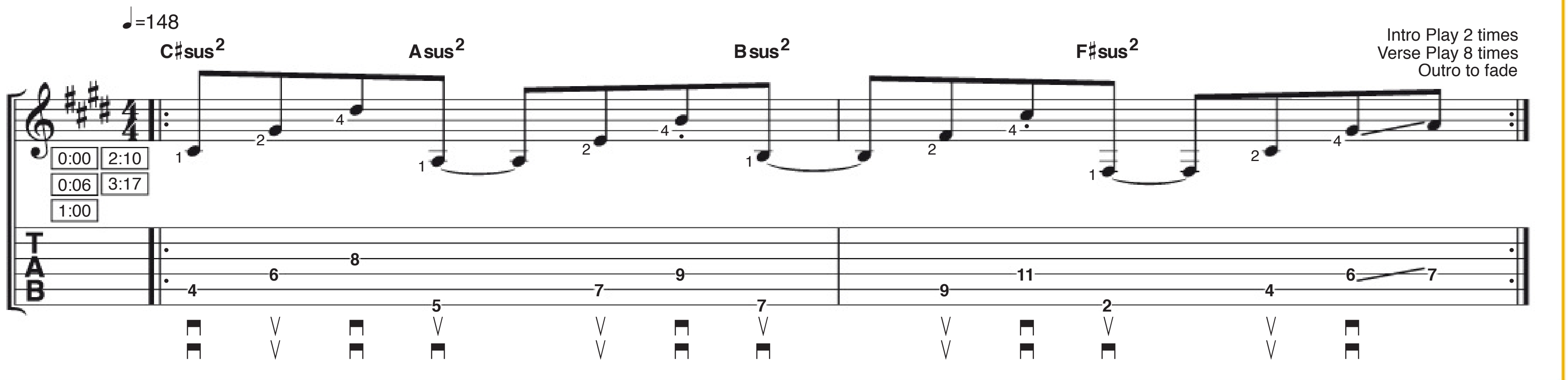
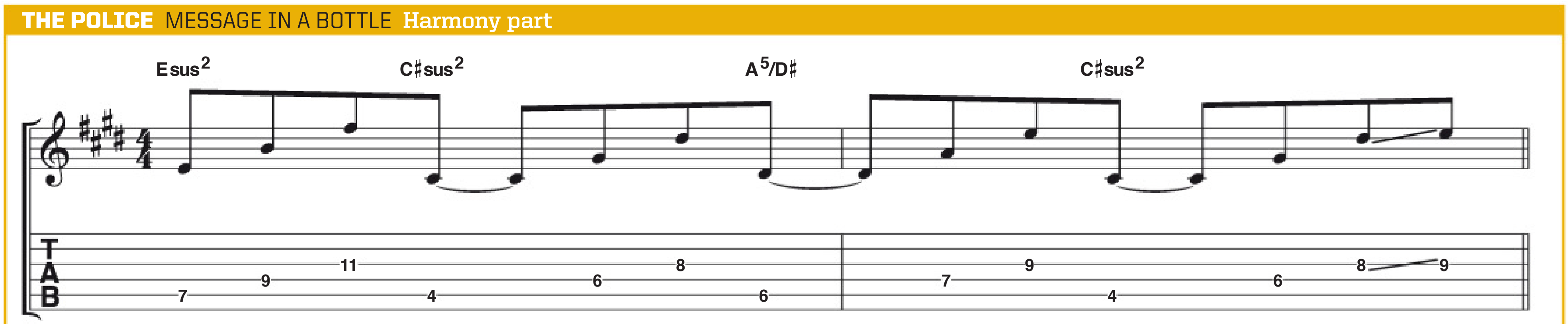
THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Intro/Verse/Outro


♩=148
C♯sus2
Asus2
Bsus2
F♯sus2
Intro Play 2 times
Verse Play 8 times
Outro to fade
0:00
2:10
0:06
3:17
1:00
TAB

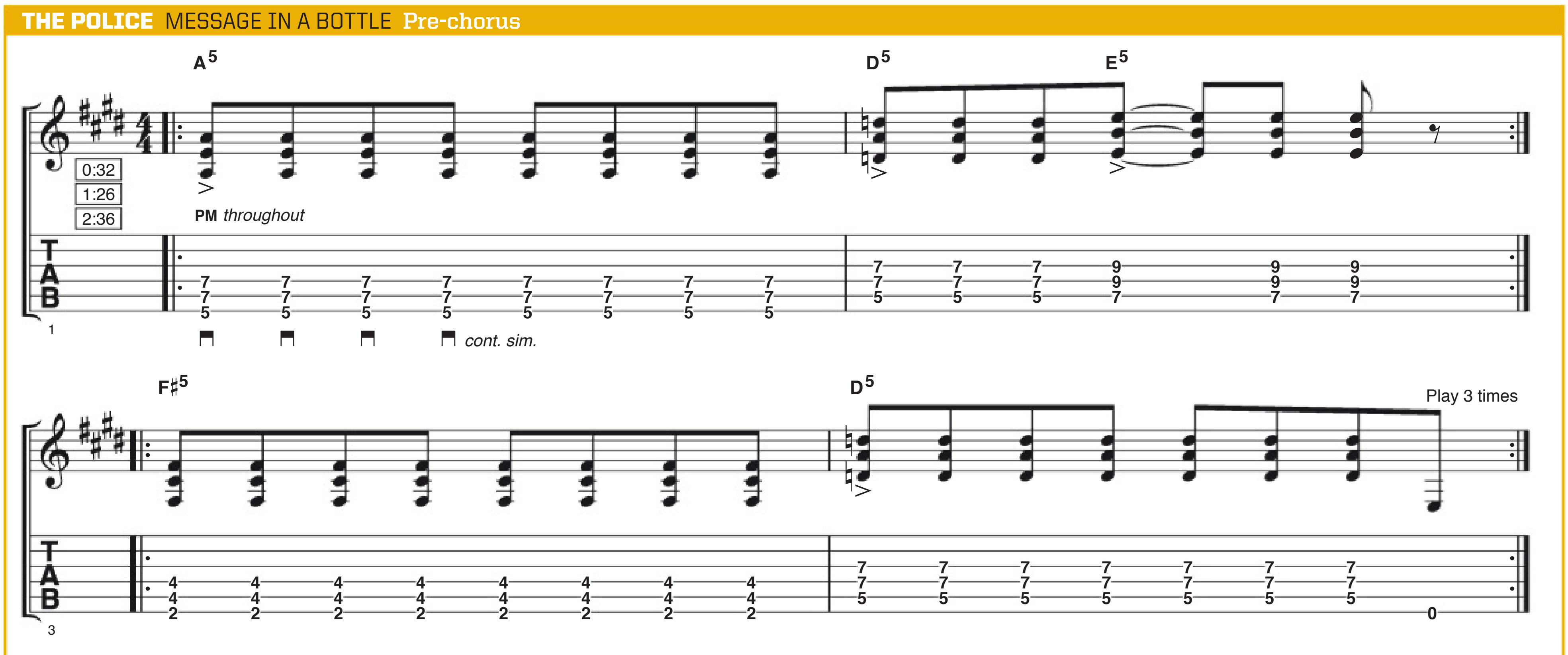
The sus2 chords in this riff are easiest when fretted with your first, second and fourth fingers. They are quite a stretch, so practise fretting the shapes first, before trying the position shifts and, finally, picking the strings one by one. We've suggested two picking approaches below the tab.

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Harmony part


Esus2
C♯sus2
A5/D♯
C♯sus2
TAB

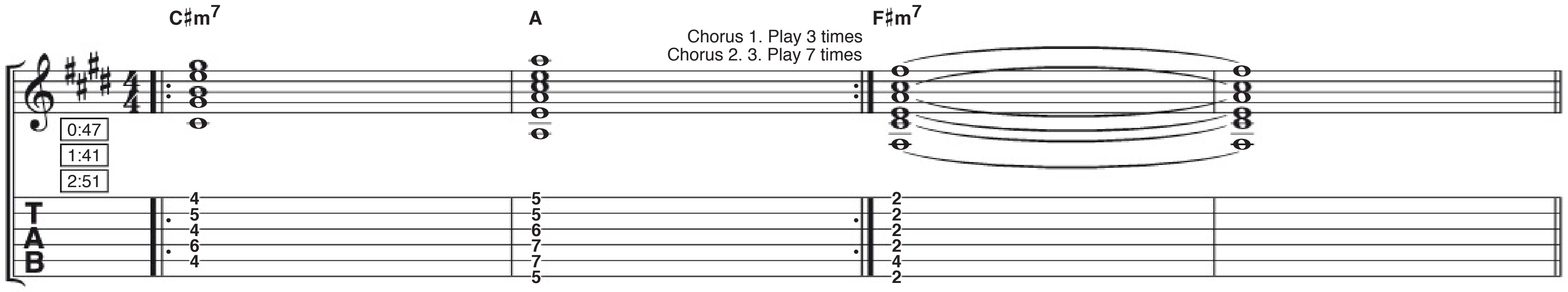
This part is played in harmony with the main riff and like the main riff, it is based on Andy Summers' signature sus2 chord shapes, so the same rules apply. With no string changes to deal with and played higher up the neck, we think this line is easier than the main riff so hone your skills here if you find the main part too challenging.

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Pre-chorus


A5
D5
E5
0:32
1:26
2:36
PM throughout
cont. sim.
F♯5
D5
Play 3 times
TAB

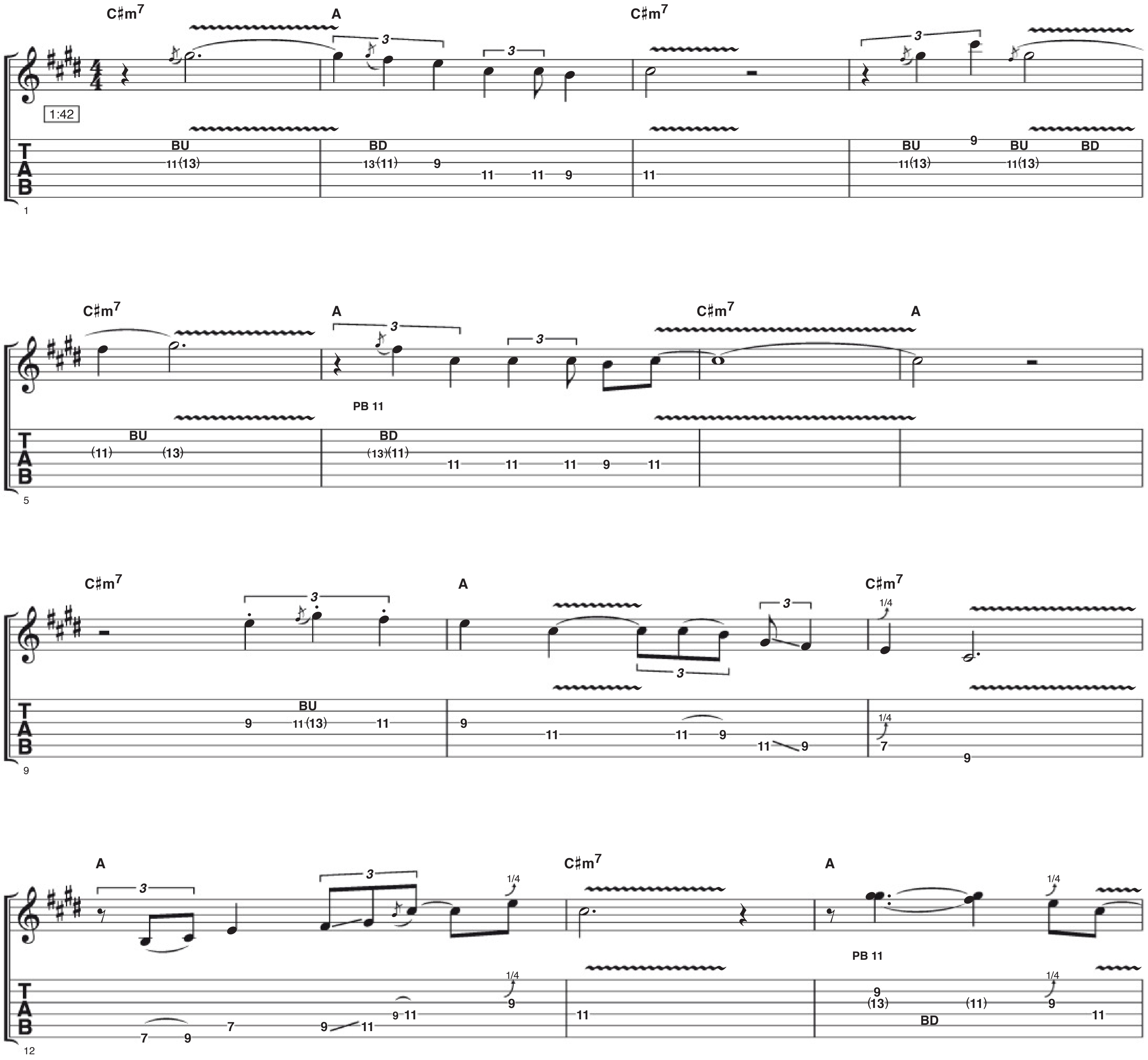
Straightforward three-note powerchord shapes are used here, played with steady downpicking and gentle palm-muting. The devil is in the detail, though; notice where the accent symbols (denoted by > in the notation) fall, and pick slightly harder to emphasise the relevant chords.

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Chorus 1 (rhythm guitar)

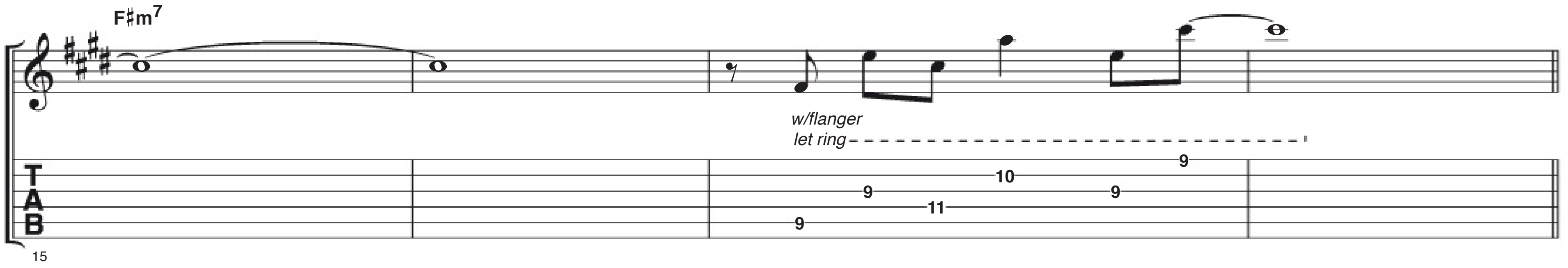

C♯m7
A
F♯m7
Chorus 1. Play 3 times
Chorus 2. 3. Play 7 times
0:47
1:41
2:51
T
A
B

Just three barre chords form this simple chorus rhythm part – all you have rot do is make sure you strum at the right time. Drummer Stewart Copeland keeps the hi-hat and snare busy, so listen out for his regular, thumping kick drum to stay in time.

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Chorus 2 (lead guitar)

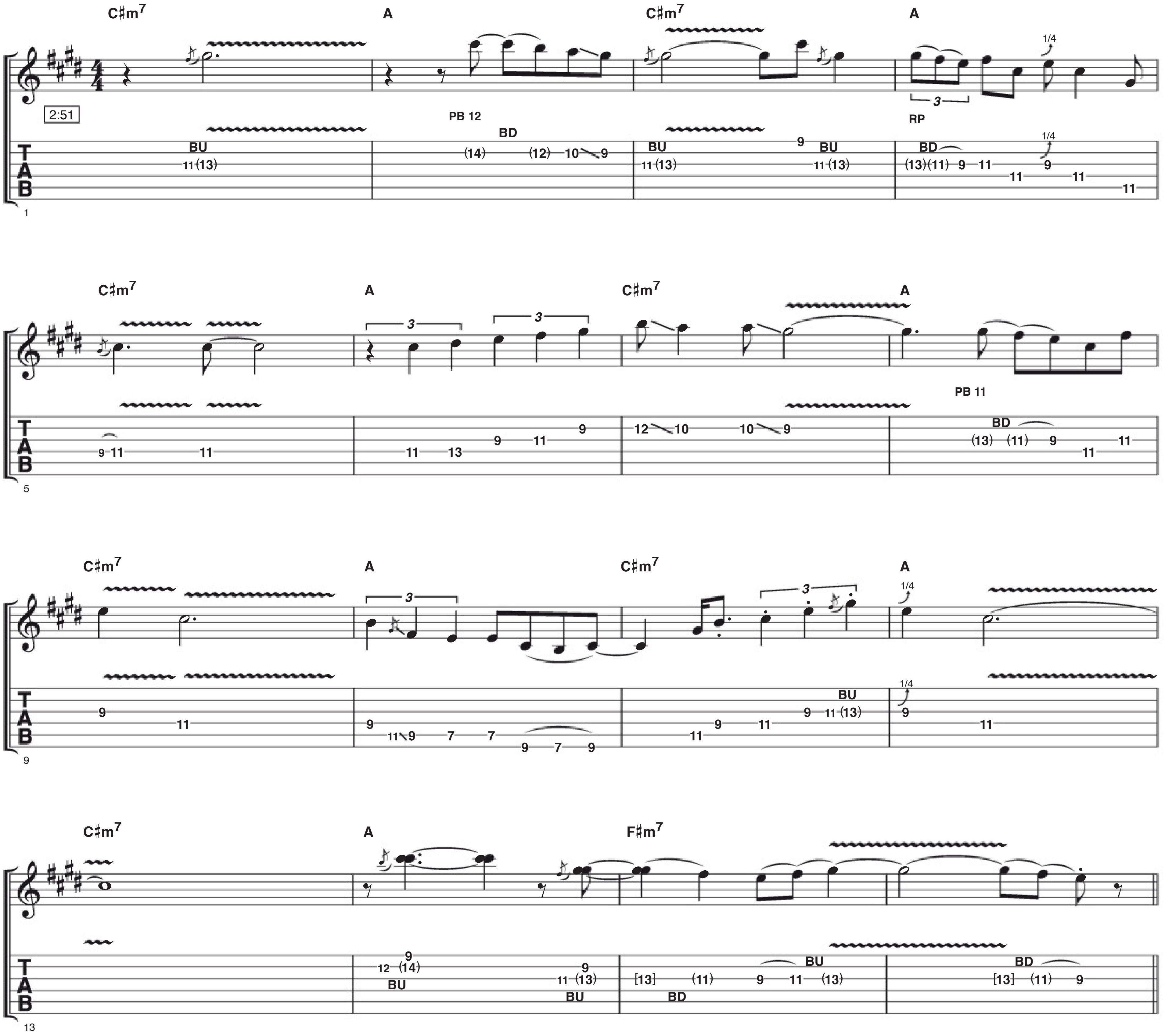

C♯m7
A
1:42
BU
BD
PB 11
1/4
T
A
B
1
5
9
12

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Chorus 2 (lead guitar, cont'd)



Summers' wailing C# minor pentatonic (C# E F# G# B) lead lines weave in and out of Sting's vocal here. Notice the regular use of triplets (three notes in the space of two – shown with a '3' and brackets over or under the notes). Bar 9 is the clearest example. You'll need steady timing for these

THE POLICE MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Chorus 3 (lead guitar)



You'll need steady fret-hand control to reproduce Andy Summers' tight but expressive lead work here. Use two, or, where possible, three fingers for the string bends. 'PB' denotes 'pre-bends', where you must bend the string to pitch before you pick the string. Practise these details before attempting the section in full.

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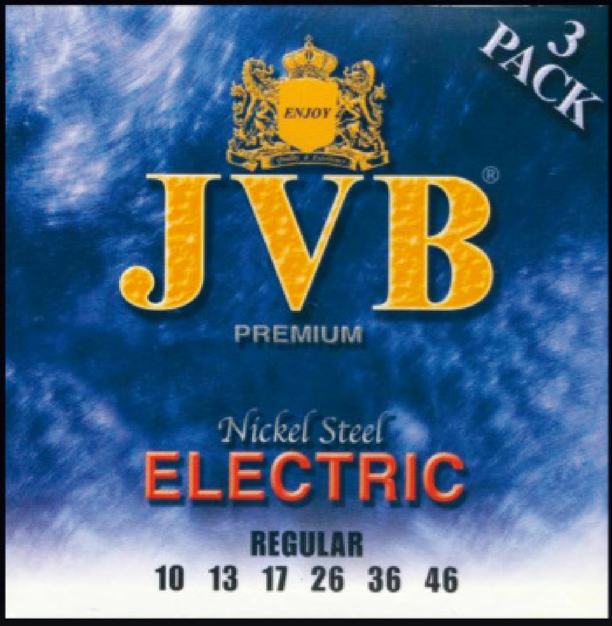
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REGULAR
10 13 17 26 36 46

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THE DARKNESS

I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE

We grant you the permission to rock, with The Darkness' twin-axe classic

2003 saw Lowestoft glam rockers The Darkness propelled to stardom as their debut album *Permission To Land* topped the charts, and a raft of feel-good singles inspired by classic acts like Queen, AC/DC, Aerosmith and Def Leppard saw the band bring fun back to rock music. *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* was the band's third single – and it's probably fair to say it remains their biggest and best known track.

Rockschool's Grade Two arrangement covers the all-important opening riff, a verse and chorus, plus an abridged version of Dan Hawkins' main guitar solo (the song's second of three lead breaks). You can use the tab to help you play to the original track. There's enough info in the transcription to cover all the rhythm parts. Why not try improvising your own ideas during solo 1 and 3?

I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE
Words and Music by Justin Hawkins, Ed Graham,
Frankie Poullain & Daniel Hawkins.

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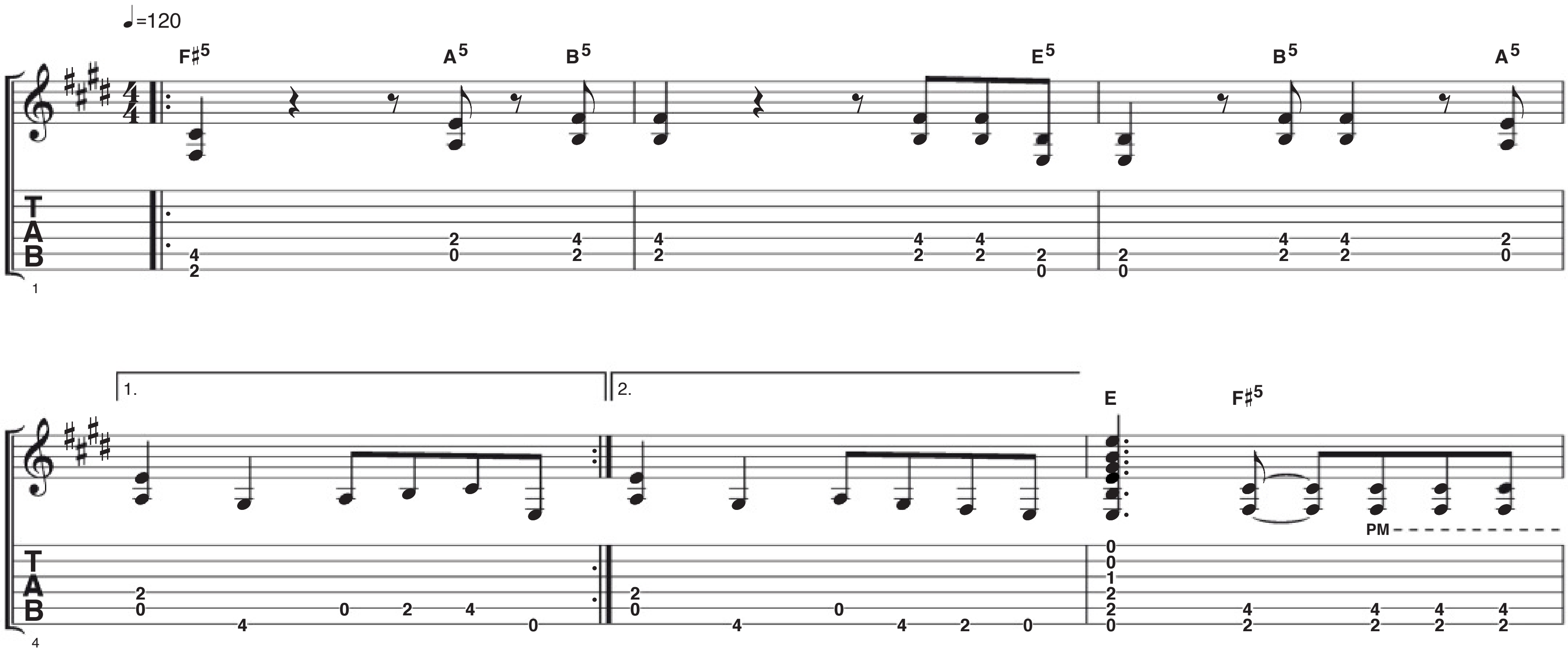
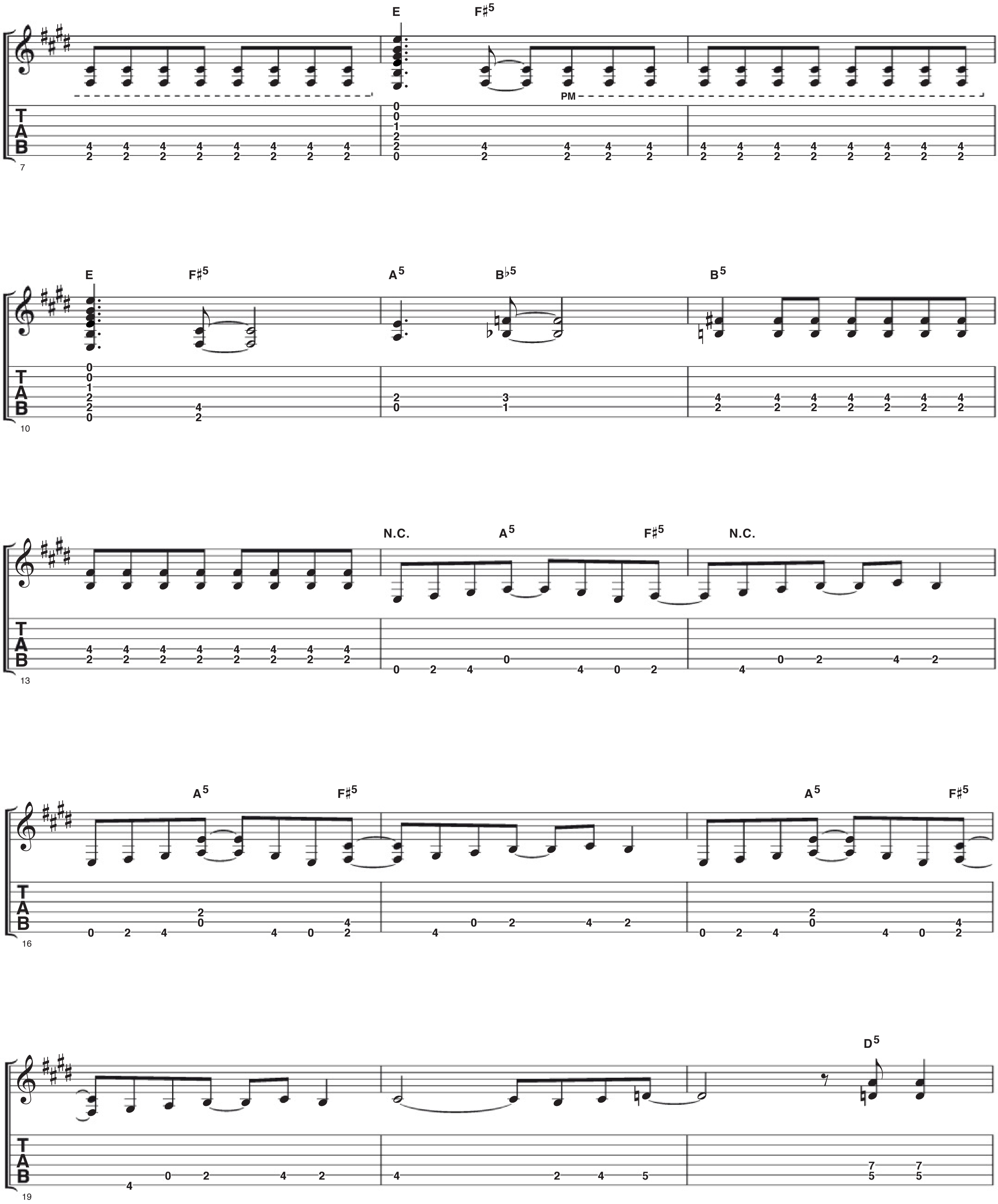
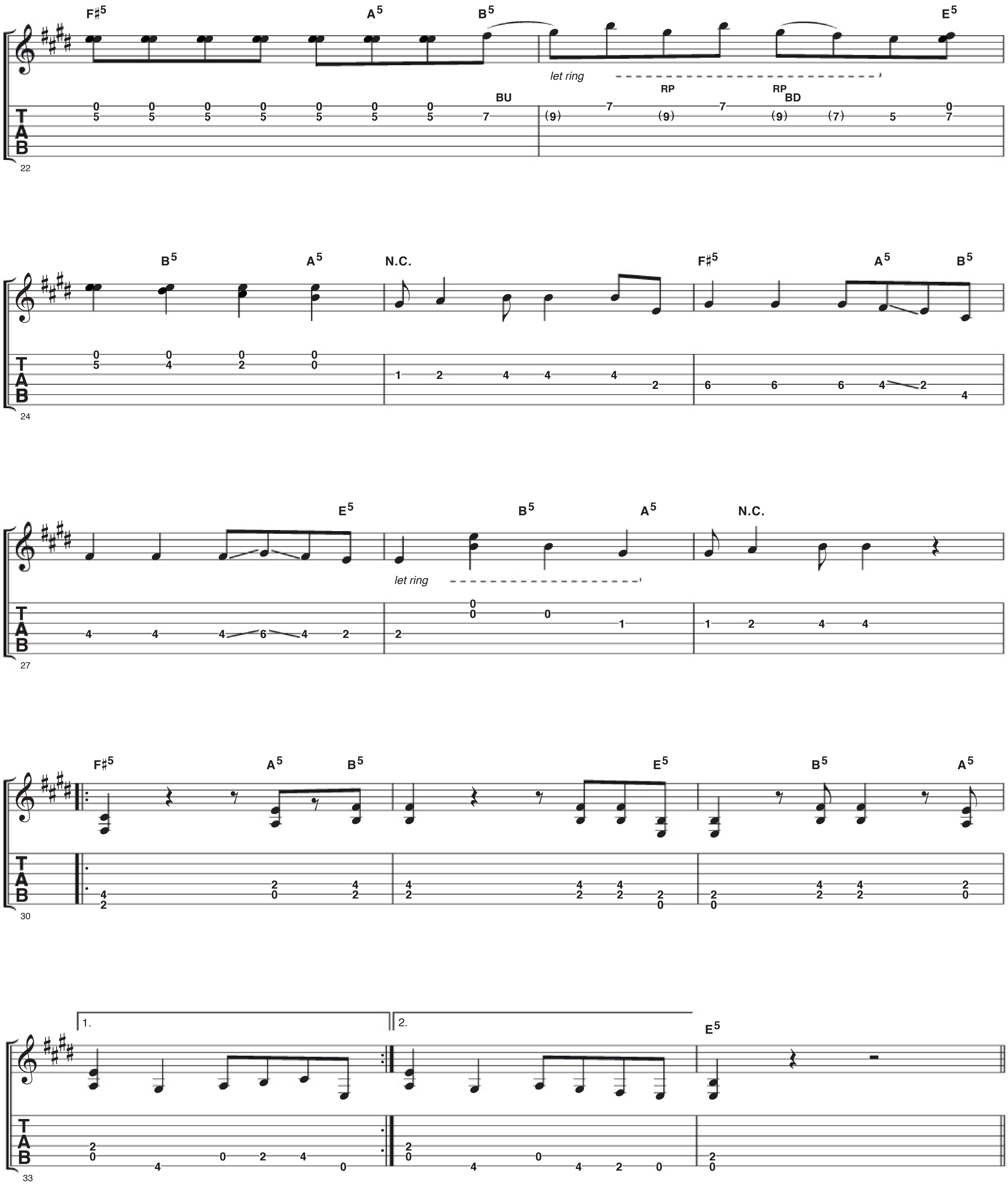
THE DARKNESS I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE



THE DARKNESS I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE


E
F♯5
PM
7
E
F♯5
A5
B♭5
B5
10
13
N.C.
A5
F♯5
N.C.
A5
F♯5
A5
F♯5
16
D5
19
T
A
B

THE DARKNESS I BELIEVE IN A THING CALLED LOVE


F♯5
A5
B5
E5
let ring
BU
RP
RP
BD
22
B5
A5
N.C.
F♯5
A5
B5
24
E5
B5
A5
N.C.
let ring
27
F♯5
A5
B5
E5
B5
A5
30
1.
2.
E5
33
T
A
B

Try to play bars 1 to 5 in one position, with your first finger staying at the 2nd fret. This short section is a great study in efficient fingering – minimising movements to keep chord changes clean. The guitar solo begins in bar 22 where, once again, you'll need to focus on clean fretting. It's easy to mute out the open first string if you angle your finger wrongly. Aim to fret the 5th fret E note right on the tip of your first finger here.

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STRING SKIPPING

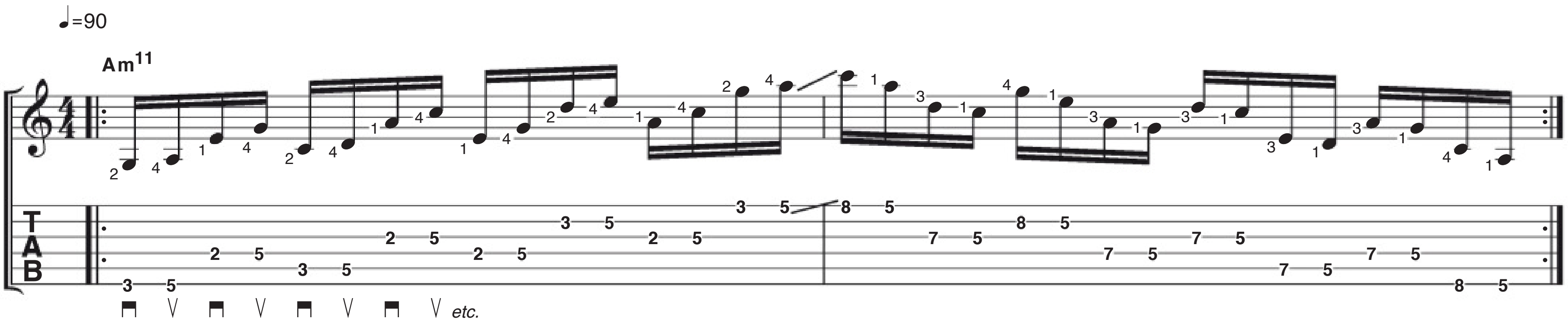
Supercharge your picking and soloing skills and create ear-grabbing ideas with TG's string skipping exercises

This special tutorial focuses on the art of string skipping with a pick. The aim is to develop your picking hand accuracy and also to provide you with some interesting new soloing ideas.

String skipping is a simple concept: the notes you play are on non-adjacent strings, so you have to 'skip' over certain strings as you play – and this calls for accurate picking. We're focusing on lead guitar here in our lesson, but it's worth noting that string skipping also applies to arpeggios in a chord/accompaniment setting too. For example, Radiohead's *Street Spirit (Fade Out)* uses the technique extensively.

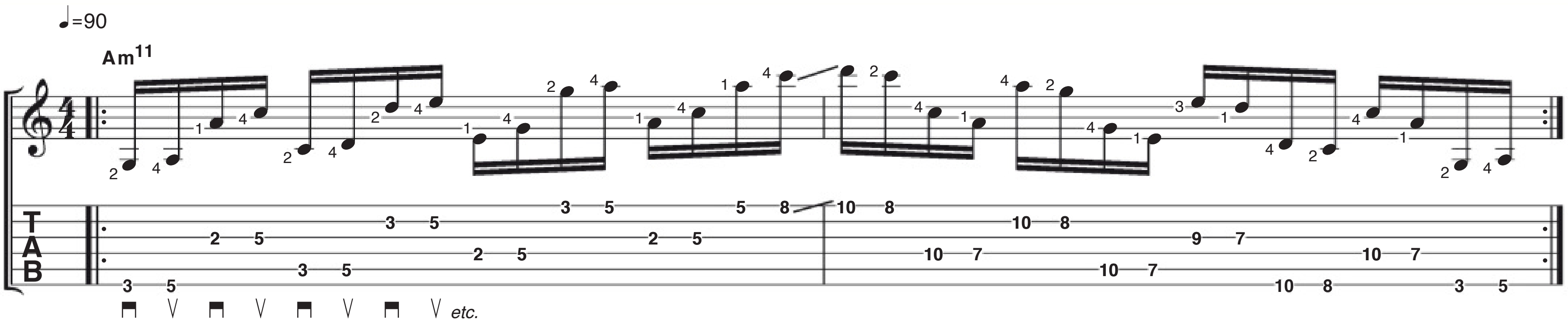
As inspiration for our lesson we've chosen some well-known guitarists who use string skipping to great effect. The idea is to learn our tab examples and then practise them with a metronome at a tempo to suit you. You can stretch yourself by gradually increasing the tempo and charting your progress over a series of days and weeks.

MINOR PENTATONIC STRING SKIPPING 1



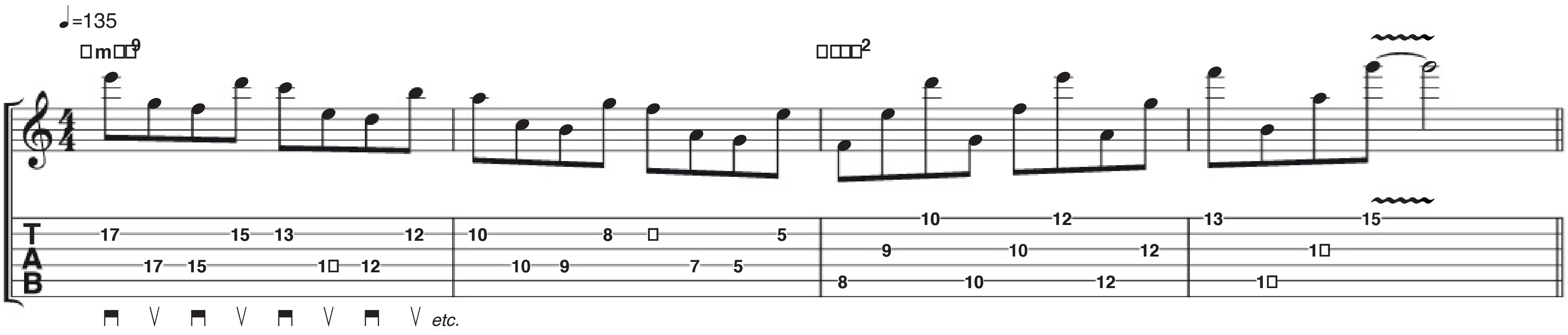
The minor pentatonic scale places two notes on each string so it's easy to create string-skipping patterns. This example works on the easiest string skip of all – the single-string skip. Start slowly and follow the picking directions and fingering shown in the tab. Dialling in an accurate technique at slower tempos is the key here.

MINOR PENTATONIC STRING SKIPPING 2



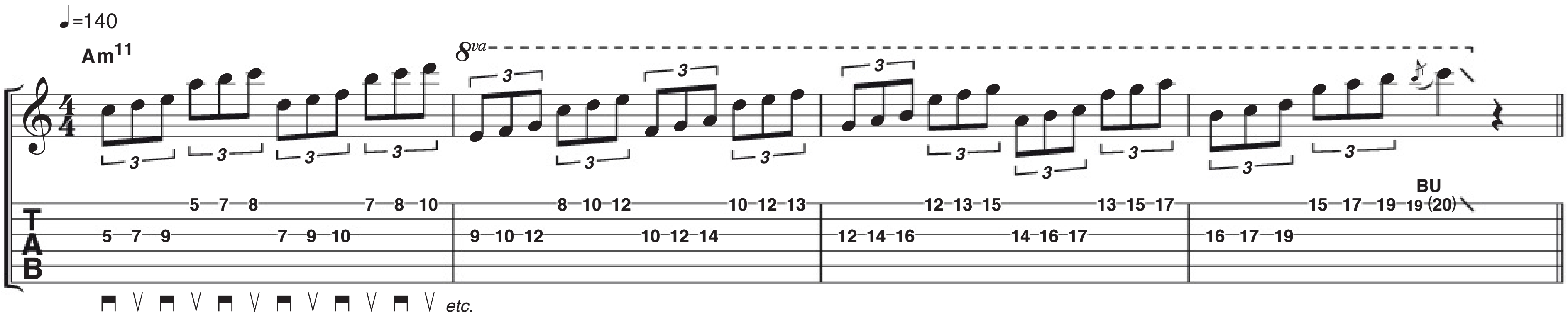
Things are getting tougher here as you skip two strings with your pick. Dial in some distortion and it's an impressive sounding lick, but it may take some time to perfect. Repetition at a slow tempo is the key so your brain can learn how far to move your pick from one string to the next.

C MAJOR SCALE INTERVALLIC EXERCISE



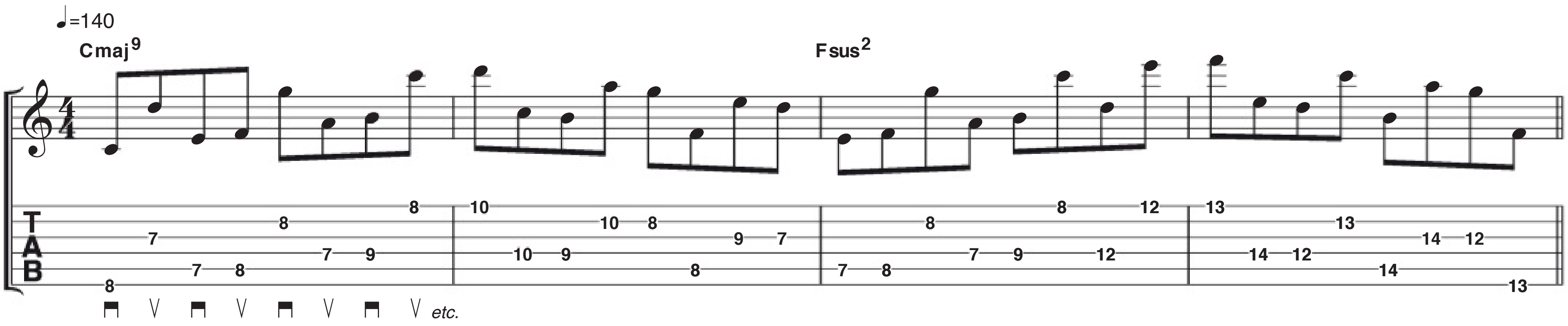
This pattern uses the 6th interval in a descending pattern. You can also play this type of idea with finger slides and continue it ascending or descending as long as you like. The idea in the last two bars will stretch your picking technique as it uses two string skips.

NUNO BETTENCOURT-STYLE STRING SKIPPING WITH A SCALE



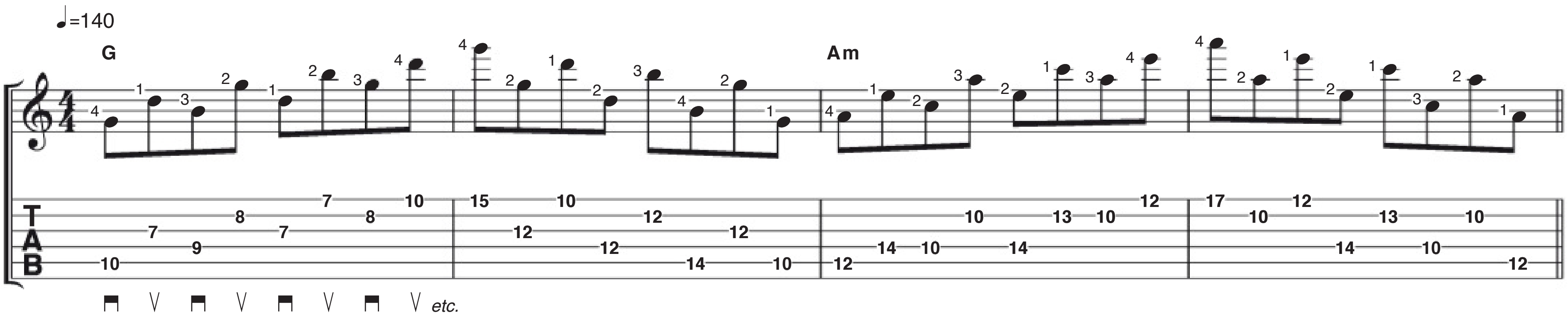
This example places three notes on the third string and three on the first string. You can ascend or descend with this idea and it is possible to build up a lot of speed with this concept. Practise slowly to begin with and consider reversing the pick strokes, starting on an up-stroke.

CARL VERHEYEN-STYLE OCTAVE DISPLACEMENT



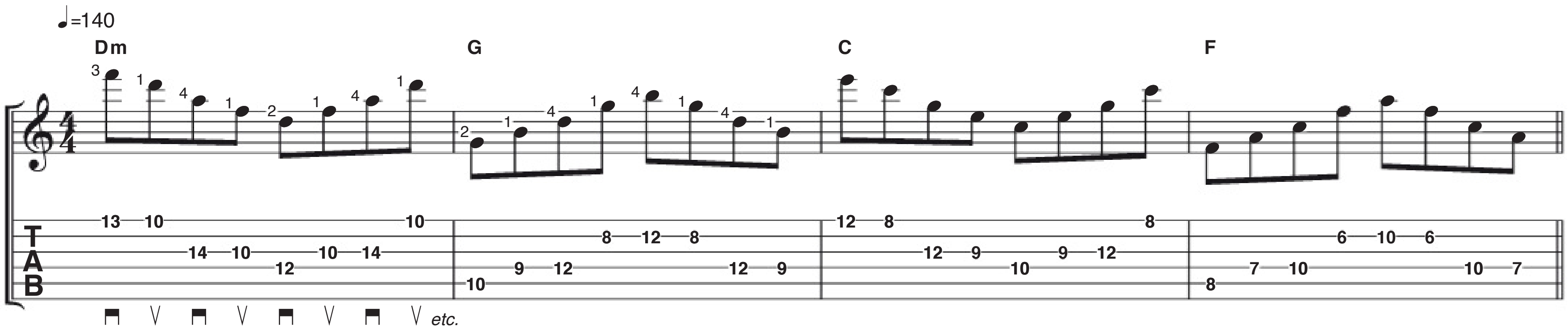
Octave displacement is a nice way to spice up the sound of scale runs. The idea is to take various intervals of the scale you are playing up or down the octave. This can be quite challenging at first but is a great way to implement the string-skipping concept. This example simply ascends up and down the major scale but sounds way more interesting with the various intervals displaced.

JOHN PETRUCCI-STYLE ARPEGGIOS



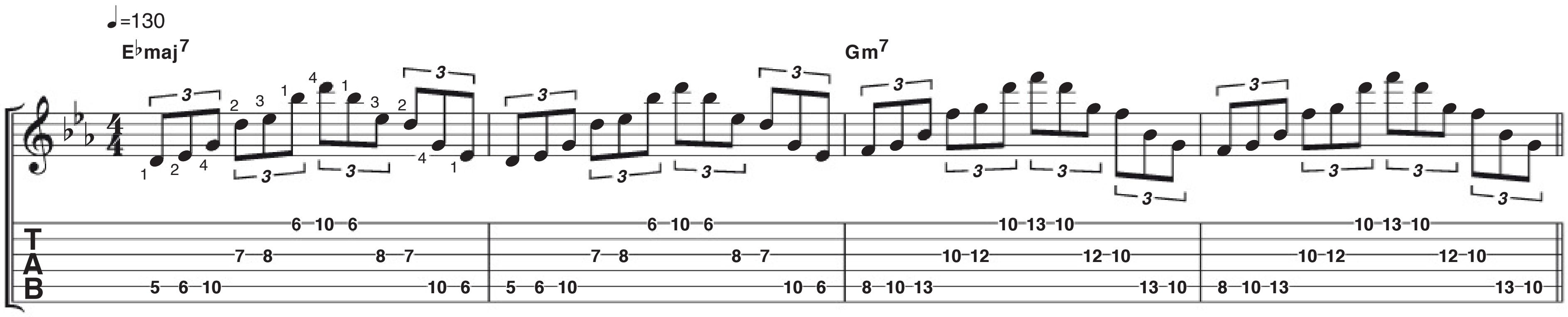
This John Petrucci-style exercise is great practice for the picking hand. The fretting hand work is a bit fiddly so we have notated a suggested fingering in the tab. Once you have this exercise mastered, see if you can incorporate it in a solo.

PAUL GILBERT-STYLE TRIAD ARPEGGIOS



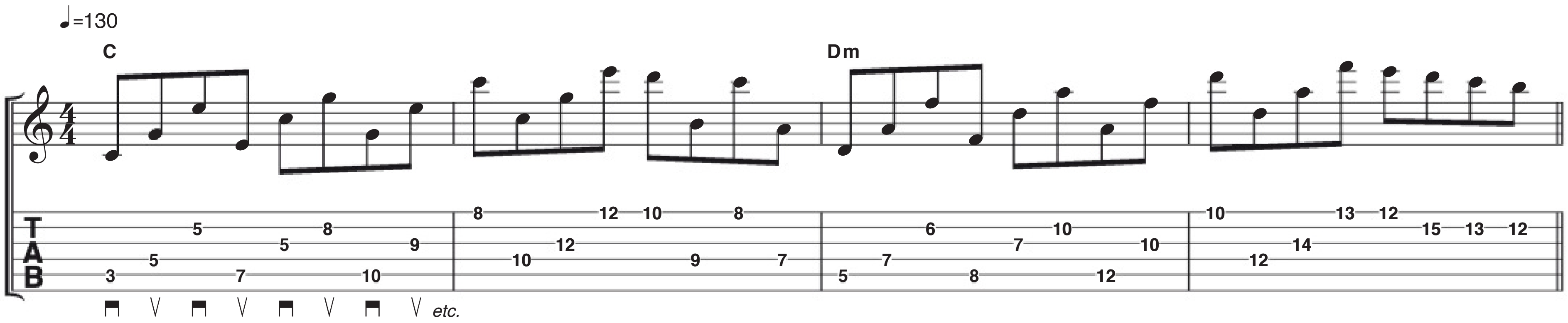
Paul Gilbert established a clever way to play triad arpeggios with string skipping. This method often sounds cleaner than sweep picking and it is also possible to apply patterns and sequences that would be impossible with the sweep picking technique.

FRANK GAMBALE-STYLE 7TH ARPEGGIOS



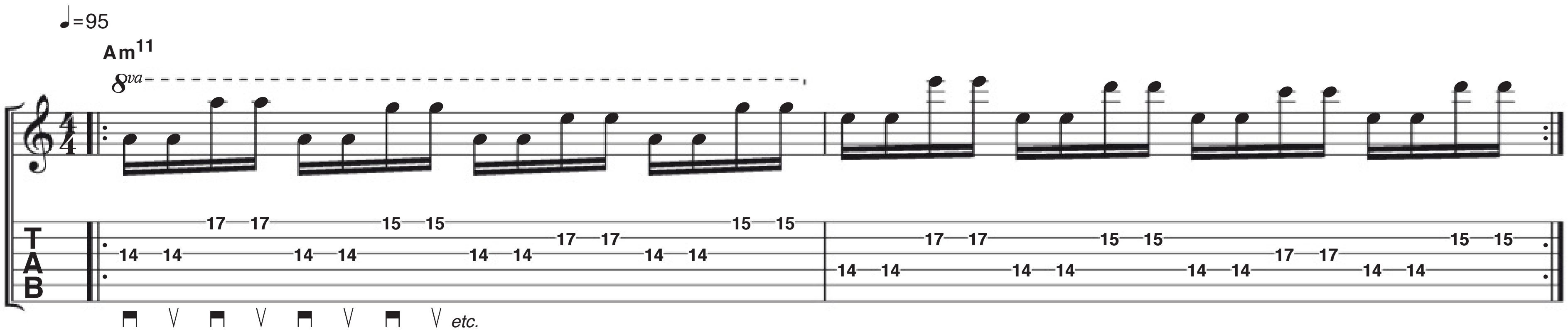
Frank Gamble has many great concepts under his fingers and string skipping is no exception. This example showcases a clever way to play 7th chord arpeggios with two string skips. For extra speed you can play this idea with hammer-ons and pull-offs.

ERIC JOHNSON-STYLE OPEN-VOICED ARPEGGIOS



The arrangement of the notes here make these EJ-style triads sound way more colourful than their closed voiced counterparts. These are fiddly to finger but there is an almost inexhaustible amount of permutations you can play with this idea. As always, accuracy is the key.

MATT BELLAMY-STYLE STRING SKIPPING



This example is another good work-out and involves playing a down and an upstroke on each string before skipping. Again, the permutations available from this idea are endless, but accuracy is vital to creating an industrial sounding lead line like this.

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Words Joe Bosso **Portraits** Eleanor Jane

"I'M THE PROUDEST I'VE BEEN IN MY LIFE OF MY GUITAR PLAYING"

As two new solo albums illustrate the breadth of his art, **Jack White** believes that he's reaching a new peak as a guitarist. "There are places I've never gone before," he says, "and techniques I thought I wasn't capable of doing..."

It is a big statement that Jack White is making this year – with the release of not one but two new solo albums. And yet, as the man himself says, this is not the result of some intensely calculated master plan. In fact, he had no plan at all...

"I know people won't believe me when I say this, but I don't really ever have a plan to make an album once I get involved in it," he explains. "I always sort of start falling into it and find myself in the middle of it, and then I say, 'Oh, wow. I guess I should start maybe thinking about this, how it's going to relate to things I've done in the past, or what I want to do next live on stage.' But just as quickly, you can find yourself in a bunch of traps because you start overthinking the public version of what you're doing, and that's not a good place to create, really."

Jack is speaking from his home in Nashville, where these new albums were written and then recorded at his Third Man Studios. He has made a couple of public appearances over the past few years, performing on *Saturday Night Live* in 2020, and playing two concerts in London last year to mark the opening of a new Third Man Records Store in the city's Soho district. But for the most part he has been laying low in Nashville as a result of the pandemic. And while he admits that the period of forced isolation affected him deeply, it was also a key factor in the sheer volume of new songs he wrote.

Once he had recorded all this material, Jack briefly considered packaging everything on one grand double-album set – an idea he quickly rejected. Instead, he divided the material into two thematic albums. With his previous solo record, 2018's *Boarding House Reach*, he struck a balance between blitzing riff monsters and mellower songs that blended rustic country, folk and blues, but with the new albums he draws distinct lines of demarcation.

Fear Of The Dawn, released in April, features plenty of boisterous guitar action. It begins with three hellacious rock load-blowers – *Taking Me Back*, the title track and *The White Raven*, all of them brimming with bonkers solos. Elsewhere on this album, *What's The Trick* is a punishing hybrid of hip-hop and metal; *That Was Then (This Is Now)* fuses way-out acid funk with good-time 70s pop crunch; a version of Cab Calloway's *Hi-De-Ho* – featuring guest vocalist Q-Tip and Black Belles guitarist Olivia Jean – has the jazz classic reimagined as unnerving psychedelia; and on the epic *Eosophobia (Reprise)*, Jack answers the musical question: what would Steve Howe on steroids sound like?

The second of these albums, *Entering Heaven Alive*, follows on July 22, and it's a different animal altogether. A more subdued, acoustic-laced work, it showcases a softer, quieter side to Jack White. But even while he's luxuriating in the acoustic pastoral elegance of *A Tip From You To Me*, evoking lush mid-60s chamber pop on *Help Me Along* or laying his soul bare on a pair of aching ballads, *Love Is Selfish* and *If I Die Tomorrow*, there's a restlessness and an overarching feeling of anxiety that runs through the album.

Recording with other musicians during on-again, off-again lockdowns proved tricky, and on much of his new music Jack handled the lion's share of instrumentation himself – electric and acoustic guitars, bass, keyboards, percussion, vibraphone, theremin; you name it. But he nixed the idea of performing everything on his own. "I just didn't want to get into that concept," he says. And so he waited until restrictions eased to call in an assortment of players for various tracks – chief among them drummers Daru Jones and

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Patrick Keeler, as well as bassists Dominic Davis and Jack Lawrence, all of whom he's worked with in the past. "I like to play with other people to get someplace new," he says. "It brings out different personalities in the songs."

In a wide-ranging conversation, Jack talks about the whole creative process that went into these albums, from writing to production. He talks about the fun he's had with guitars designed by Eddie Van Halen and St. Vincent. And he suggests that his playing on *Fear Of The Dawn* might just be the best he has ever laid down...

Let's talk first about songwriting – and how you wrote enough for two albums...

Songs were just coming out every day, and I was getting lucky. You start to hit a streak where several tracks keep pouring out. It's funny because you don't really know where they're coming from, or why they're coming, so when it's happening it's just best to get out of the way and let it happen.

How much of this was the result of isolation during the pandemic?

It's been tragic for the entire world. The sadness of people dying and how this has disrupted everything – it's left me with a whole new respect for the fragility of human life. At the same time, as an artist, to be put in that position where I was basically told, 'You can't leave your house,' I found that inspiring. Constriction has always been something that turns me on and gets me motivated. That part wasn't hard for me at all. It was actually a blessing, and it made me have a whole rebirth.

How much time do you spend on a song before you decide if it's good enough or not?

If it doesn't sound interesting very quickly, I quickly abandon it. Every artist is different, but for me, I know pretty fast whether there's anything I can find some life in. Like riffs – every guy on the street can write a riff, but is it interesting to other people? It just comes down to taste, but along with that there's how you execute it live or in the studio. That comes down to taste, as well. Once you do all that, and you mix it and present it to people, are they going to get anything out of it? Who knows? The ability to quickly decipher whether something is interesting or not can't be taught in school. You just have to have it in you, and I don't really think I'm that good at it.

You don't?

I don't think I'm really that good at saying, "Oh, that's a great song!" But I am good at knowing if it's something I won't enjoy playing live. If it's something I don't get much out of when I listen to a mix, I get away from it and move on to something else.

Do you ever bounce things off other people? Like, 'Hey, I've got this song that I don't know about. What do you think?'

I bounce it off people once I think it's interesting. The hardest part is playing things for somebody, like, 'God, this sounds like a song somebody else already wrote. Does anybody know this song?' I do that quite often. What sucks is when you play it for fifteen other musicians and no one recognises it, and then you release it and all these people start saying, 'Oh, that sounds like *blah blah blah*.' I'm like, 'Oh, my God. Why didn't somebody mention that?' Because we're living in an era where there's been so much recorded music in the last, whatever, seventy years – it's not like 1966, when only five guys had tried it.

You've self-produced your records for quite some time. Do you ever think about using an outside producer to get another perspective?

Yeah, I might do that in the future. Producers are good for people who don't want to bother themselves with orchestration, arrangement, production, all that other stuff, and they just want to be a singer or a bass player or whatever. That's when a producer comes in handy. I'm actually more interested in the production and the direction of the stuff than I am of the actual performance part of it. For me, it's like, 'OK, I can do that. That's not a big problem, but can I bring this to life?' That's what I'm more interested in. Over the years, I've lost interest in producing other artists as much as I used to. I used to do it a lot in the early days of Third Man Records, but it's a lot more difficult because you have to understand that everybody wants something different from a producer. Some people want absolutely no input from a producer; they just want some comfort. And other people want you to do everything for them, and it's really hard to know what that is. You can't come in the room with the exact same attitude every time.

With these two new albums, how did you figure out which songs belonged on each?

This is the first time where it was like, 'Wow, this song is so heavy and this song is so soft and melancholy. They cannot go next to each other on a record.' On my computer, I had softer songs on one playlist, and the harder

> "EVERY TIME I WALK INTO A ROOM WHERE THERE'S A GUITAR, I END UP PICKING IT UP. YOU NEVER STOP"

HAPPY JACK
"If someone asked me, 'What's a good example of your guitar playing?' I would give them *Fear Of The Dawn* over anything else," Jack says.

songs were on another. So it was kind of simple – the songs divided themselves up.

The first three songs on *Fear Of The Dawn* – *Taking Me Back*, *The White Raven* and the title track – have got really brutal guitar riffs. What is the balance between guitars and synths on those songs? It's hard to tell because the sound is so dense and overwhelming.
I would say it's probably 75 per cent guitar on the record. I recently told somebody that, on this record, I'm probably the proudest I've been in my life of my guitar playing and performing. If someone asked me, 'What's a good example of your guitar playing?' I would give them *Fear Of The Dawn* over anything else. There are places I've never gone before, and there's new techniques I thought I wasn't capable of doing. I think I was finally able to tap into thirty years of experimenting and failing, trying to get a certain tone and not really getting there. Now I actually have what you hoped you would have as you get older, which is a little bit of wisdom about how to put a mic in the right place or how to manipulate an amplifier to get what you want out of it. These are things that I wish I could back and teach my 21-year-old self how to do. I hoped that this would happen as I got older, and it's finally starting to show up now.

You played a theremin on the title track. How much practice goes into mastering one?
It's not an easy instrument to play. That was wild, because I just wanted to do one little sound effect. I turned it on and tried to get that sound to open up a section that had an empty hole, and I continued to play as more and more sounds came out that made sense. It was all about electricity, and it reminded me of the Captain Beefheart song *Electricity* that has a theremin. I thought, 'Oh, this makes sense.' I just started digging a little bit deeper. It's pretty difficult. I couldn't do exactly what I wanted to with the theremin, but I got close on a couple of moments.

There is one new song, *That Was Then (This Is Now)*, that sounds like the 70s glam band The Sweet. Do you hear that?
I do. Sometimes the best ones are when someone says, 'That sounds like The Sweet,' but somebody else says, 'Oh, no, that sounds like Slade.' Then someone else says, 'No, that sounds like early Marc Bolan.' The best ones are when people say different things. When everyone says the same thing, it almost feels like a failure. I never try to reference something literally when I write; there's no point in trying to do a pastiche. For example, if I sat down and said, 'I want to write a song like The Sweet,' I probably would fail and end up sounding like Devo or something.

Speaking of references, the song *A Tip From You to Me* from *Entering Heaven Alive* is like acoustic Neil Young meets the country side of the Stones' *Exile On Main St.*
I really love that track, and at first I thought it should just be me and an acoustic guitar. Then when we got a band and I was finally able to get a couple musicians in the studio, we played it and it felt really good. Once we got to mixing, I thought, 'Wow, this has to open the album up.'

There is also a Stones vibe in *Help Me Along*, reminiscent of that pop-Elizabethan period on *Aftermath*.
Ah, okay. It's nice when you feel like a song isn't fully there yet, and you keep digging into it. That was one of those songs where I kept digging and digging, and it got better and better. Whereas sometimes, you dig and you realize you're making it worse, like you're trying to polish a mud pie. But that song was the opposite; as I layered, it got better and better. It's got four different keyboard players on it, which is crazy.

You don't mind hearing these references, do you?
No, no. I love to hear them!

Good – because *Queen Of The Bees* is a beautiful pop song that's like a classic

"EVERY GUY ON THE STREET CAN WRITE A RIFF, BUT IS IT INTERESTING TO OTHER PEOPLE?"

STAR TURN
Jack performs the US National Anthem prior to the Opening Day game at Comerica Park in Detroit, Michigan.

Photo Getty

Donovan number from the 60s.
Yeah, I can see that. It has a whimsical nature to it. It's a love song, but it could be seen as a novelty song. It's got some strangeness that I could really dig into. A lot of it was done on the new digital Mellotron. I have a real Mellotron on the album, too, but on this song it's the digital one. It was really interesting to mess around with it.

Let's talk more about gear. When you performed a tribute to Eddie Van Halen on *Saturday Night Live* in 2020, you played a guitar he had designed. Did you get to know him?
We had a bit of a relationship. What happened was, when I was doing my last album, *Boarding House Reach*, I found that the songs took weeks of rehearsal, which was something new to me. I thought, 'I want to get the easiest guitar there is to play', which is the opposite of what I normally do. I saw an interview with Eddie Van Halen and [EVH Master Builder] Chip Ellis in which they talked about building the Wolfgang EVH guitar. Eddie talked about how he didn't want to fight the guitar, and I thought, 'OK, that might be the one for me.' I bought one, and sure enough, it was so easy to play. It practically played itself. That's when I got into customizing it to my liking. I took his design, and I customized it to some specs that I like – pickups, switches, material and stuff, the paint job. But yes, he and I had a little bit of a relationship, talking back and forth, and he taught me a couple things. There were some texts. It was nice, although we never met in person, which is a shame.

You've been playing some other artists' signature models in recent years – a St. Vincent guitar and one by Jeff 'Skunk' Baxter, famous for his work in the 70s with The Doobie Brothers and Steely Dan. What brought that about?
On that tour, I wanted to use three guitars designed by other players. One was Eddie, one was Baxter, and one was St. Vincent. It was so interesting to see what other people think is the ultimate tone and versatility for their stage instruments. I think it all applied to me as I was building these custom Fender things that I used on The Raconteurs tour, along with what I'm going to be using this year. I put a lot of different ideas into the Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster, and I road-tested it. It's a heavy guitar, and after I put a lot of gadgetry in it, the weight got even heavier — which I don't mind that much. We changed the B-bender situation in the Tele, so now there's a B-bender and a G-bender, but no Bigsby for all six strings.

There was a time when you became the poster boy for inexpensive guitars. A lot of people followed your lead.
Yeah, that kind of shocked me – I was surprised that people liked anything I was doing back then. Also, it was surprising that they would find the guitars I was playing interesting because it was something I always loved and had been doing for years. The garage rock scene in Detroit and across the country were into finding lesser-known guitars. I was very deep into that stuff, and I think we just caught a moment where people got turned onto what the possibilities are with those other models. It's great to see that it's still around today. I still see a bit of that infatuation, which the internet helped progress a bit. What's great now is how you can find these things so easily. I always tell people that I looked for a 100-watt Silvertone amp for probably eight years before I found one. That's how hard it was back then. You had to go to conventions; you had to go to every guitar shop in every town you went to. I never saw one. Now, of course, you can buy one on Reverb or in two seconds. When I was in The White Stripes, Jack Oblivian [Memphis-born guitarist and garage rock cult hero] sold me that red Airline guitar for 250 bucks. I don't think I saw another one for five years. That's what it was like back then. When you found a good thing, you held on to it like gold because you know that you're never going to see it again.

Have any new guitars made their first appearances on these albums?
Just a new Fender that I'm working on – a custom one. Chip Ellis has been helping me a lot at Fender. It's been really great to be able to dream up an idea and have these talented people make it come to life. That's a real blessing. I'm glad I finally decided to do that, because I love to design and construct things like that. I wish I had done it earlier, but I'm glad I'm doing it now. I'm really getting a lot of life out of it, and it's inspiring me to pick up the guitar. I can't wait to go on stage with this guitar.

You've said how proud you are of your guitar playing these days. But do you ever sit and 'practise'?
It never needs to be scheduled – it just happens. I think that's what goes on with people like me. I couldn't do anything else, so my life was always dedicated to music. Every time I walk into a room where there's a guitar, I end up picking it up, or I sit down at a piano. You never stop. I think the only thing I really need to do right now is go back and learn all the chord structures from these new songs for the tour rehearsals. That's what I've got to go refresh my brain about, because there's so many new songs.

Words Jonathan Horsley **Portraits** Eleanor Jane

Jack White and the retro future of guitar

What can we learn from Jack's gear? Looking through his collection, it's clear he is at once the junk store aficionado and the nutty professor, chasing tones that exist out of the pop-cultural timeline...

Jack White cast himself as a rock 'n' roll revivalist as The White Stripes were making their bones at the Gold Dollar in Detroit, reanimating garage punk with the hectic industrial pulse of the city. But that was never the whole story.

Over the years he has been equally a Nikola Tesla figure, an innovator, taking a pedalboard ex machina approach to electric guitar tone, demonstrating a design and entrepreneurial acumen that has made his label, Third Man Records, a self-sustaining indie powerhouse.

His gear choices add to the intrigue. This is the man who coated his go-to 50s Kay archtop with paper and made the Airline fibre-glass bodied electric a must-have, and yet he does not restrict himself to pawnshop gold. Heck, he was on the cover of this magazine with a Gretsch White Penguin. That day, he said guitars were tools be treated with "respect or disgrace". He might be onto something.

PAWNSHOP GOLD

1964 'JB Hutto' Res-O-Glass Airline Guitar

Think of Jack White and the chances are it will be this retro electric that comes to mind. It was a model long forgotten, an oddity comprised of a hollow fibreglass body, with a pair of Valco single-coils in humbucker-sized covers, a non-adjustable neck with few high-profile users. Rory Gallagher used one but its found its true calling in The White Stripes, its voice just the thing for a sound that stood astride the threshold of garage punk chaos. They used to be cheap. But for a while in the 2000s they were the coolest guitar you could find, and amid an over-heating market for vintage models Eastwood made a reissue.

50s Kay Archtop

Covered in paper to stop it squealing or to make it look good? It certainly won't play good, at least not in the conventional sense. But then Jack White has spoken before relishing a little fight with a guitar. Wrestling a difficult setup can yield some great tones; it'll make you play harder, too. The Kay, however, is parked in open A and used for slide, perhaps the only technique that finds tender mercy in a guitar's high action. He recently used it to play the national anthem at Comerica Park, home of the Detroit Tigers.

1970s Crestwood Astral II

The 1970s were not altogether kind on guitar design and manufacturing but then it did bring forth some thrift store curios that seem tailor-made for gear iconoclasts. Again, this is another from the early days of The White Stripes, and like the Airline, it was also subject to an Eastwood remake. It is the sort of guitar that deserves a ramshackle tube amp in need of a service and a capricious germanium fuzz to bring the best out of it. White has also used a variety of Harmony Meter and Rocket hollowbodies, each providing a variation on the theme – big on resonance and free-radical quirks, low on price, and very cool.

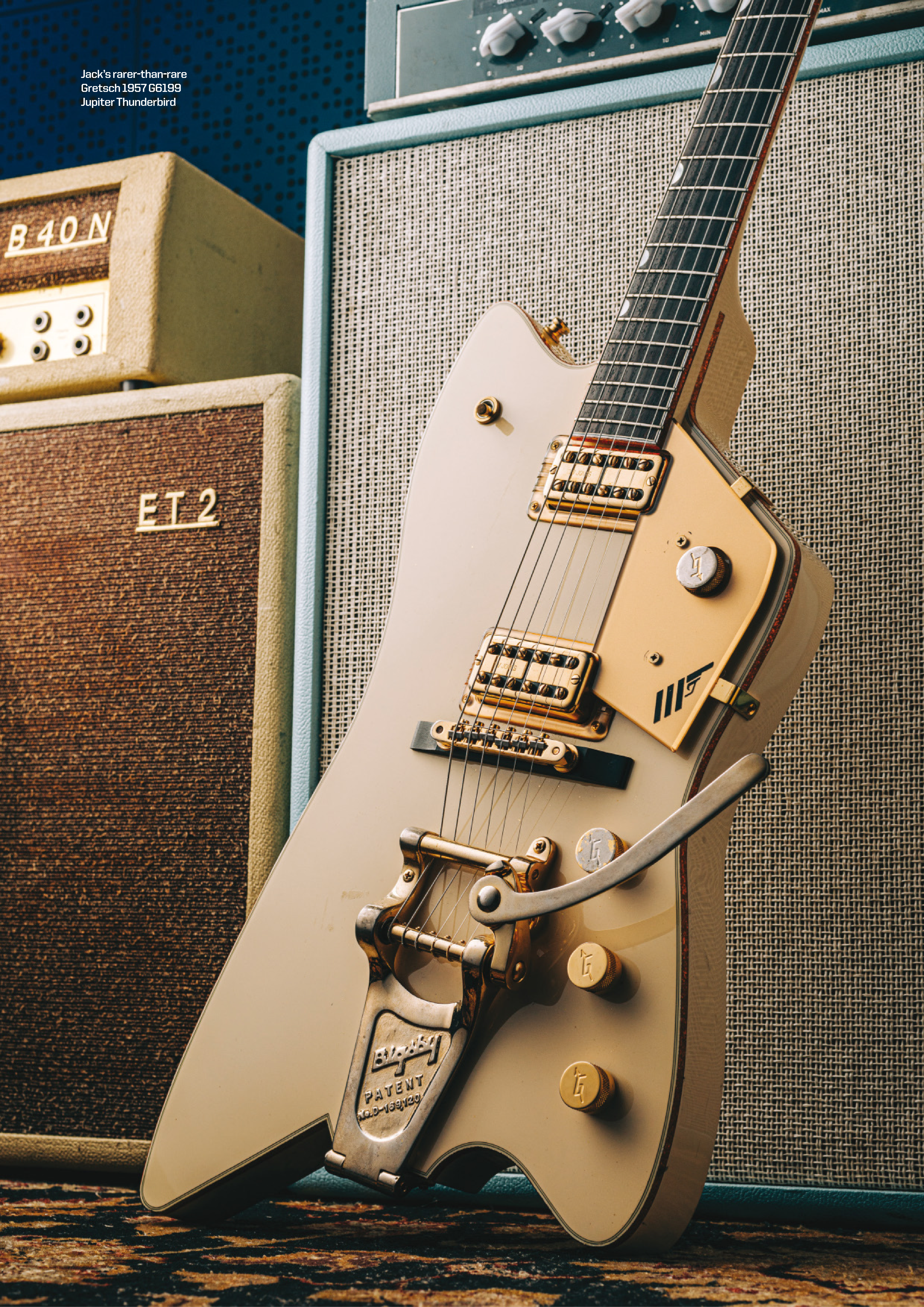
1969 Fender Telecaster with Bigsby / 1954 Fender Telecaster

Thematically and spiritually, the Fender Telecaster was made for White. It is the hammer reborn as electric guitar, the ultimate tool. You can hear these across The White Stripes catalogue, and later White would bring onboard some more modded Teles, but alongside the Airline and Kay guitars, these Teles were crucial in the recording of *Icky Thump*.

1957 Gretsch G6134 White Penguin

The guitar from TG's 2007 cover, this high-end bird was purchased in Nashville around 2007, and it was not a purchase White made lightly.

Jack's rarer-than-rare Gretsch 1957 G6199 Jupiter Thunderbird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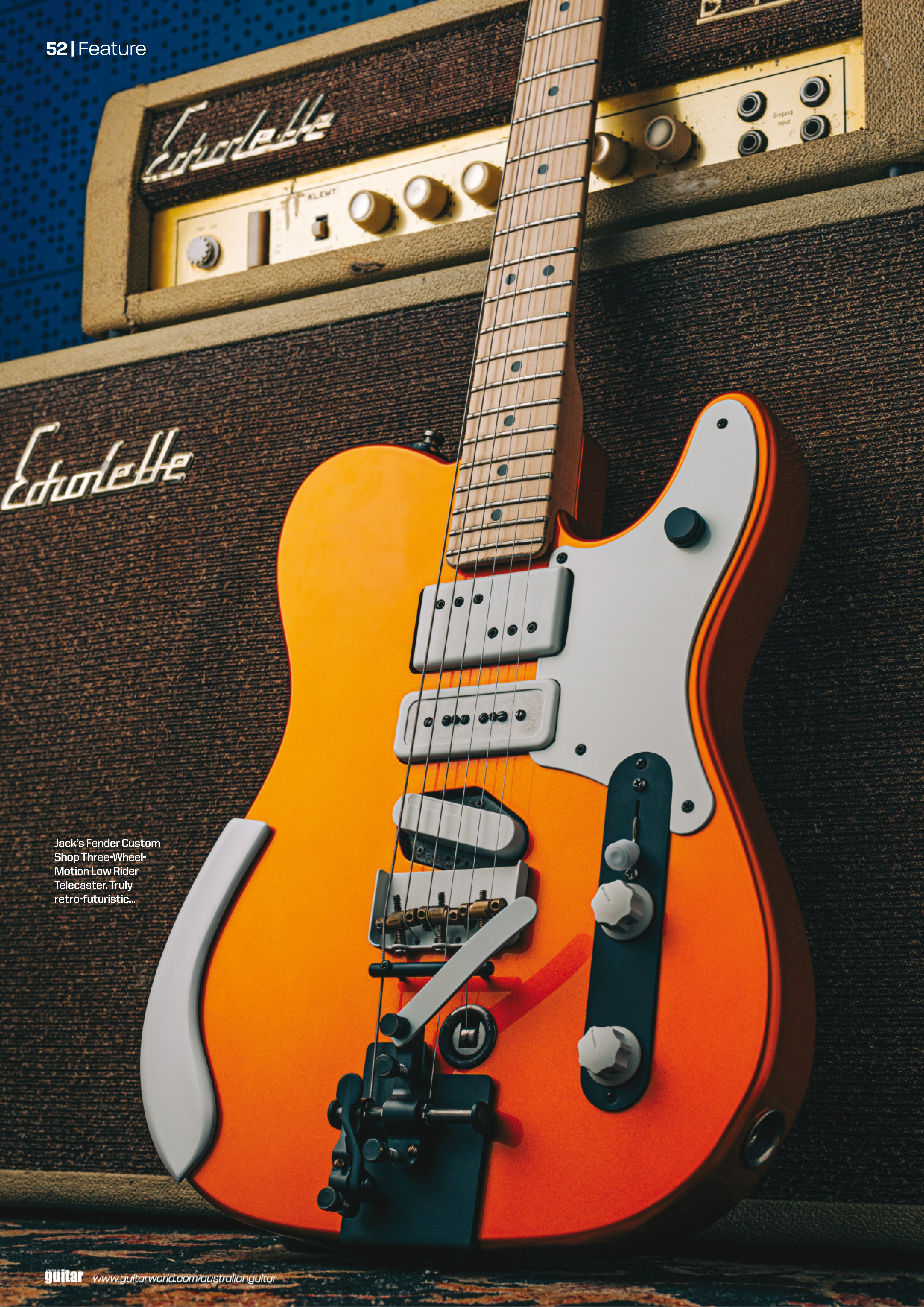
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Jack's Fender Custom Shop Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster. Truly retro-futuristic…

Understandably, given the retail price on such a rare vintage bird. Weirdly, he said it performed not unlike the Airline, and that is one of the big lessons we can take from White's gear choice. Price doesn't matter; feel and tone are everything.

Gretsch 1957 G6199 Jupiter Thunderbird

Rarer than hen's teeth, with reportedly only 12 to 16 models made, White most notably used this retro-futuristic electric with the Dead Weather.

OFF-MENU CUSTOM BUILDS

Modded Gretsch 'Copper Triple Jet'

Working with Randy Parsons, White took the double-cutaway chassis of a Jet and turned it into a three-pickup monster with an MXR Micro Amp wired to the middle pickup to provide on-tap overdrive. As White explained to *Guitar Player*, he liked the elemental nature of the copper top, and for The Raconteurs, everything had to be copper – microphones, pedals, the lot. "We even went as far as putting copper frets on that guitar –just to see how it sounded," said White. "It sounded incredible! But copper is so malleable that the frets wore out after one show."

Modded Gretsch Anniversary Jr 'Triple Green Machine'

Take one G6118, make it a double cutaway and a third pickup, and you might have something worth showing your friends. But here's a guitar that shows you how White's mind works. This mutant Gretsch, spec'd up with Randy Parsons, speaks to the showman in White – not to mention the MacGyver – housing a wooden replica of a 'green bullet' Shure mic that can be pulled out and screamed into, and a theremin for added *Twilight Zone* noise. It also features MXR Micro Amp routed to the middle pickup a la the 'Copper Triple Jet' and a lever-controlled mute for string-dampening. It is a bizarro guitar, and yet so practical.

Three Golden Gibsons: Fort Knox Les Paul, Flying V, Skunk Baxter Firebird

Another instance of an elementary metal catching White's magpie eye, the Three Golden Gibsons project all share the 'Fort Knox' treatment, with Gold Top bodies, gold hardware, and a suite of custom appointments. The Les Paul – a real heavyweight – came first, a gift from Gibson with White specifying a maple neck. But after surprising him with a Flying V in a similar treatment, White ordered a third Firebird to Skunk Baxter specs. These were used for The Raconteurs.

Gretsch G6022CWFF Rancher Falcon 'Rita'

This cutaway acoustic looks like it is on loan from Dollywood but turn it around and you'll see where it gets its name, Kore Flatmo's pyrographic illustration of film icon Rita Hayworth. It was used extensively on the *Icky Thump* tour. Besides the Rita drawing, using red sparkle vinyl instead of the gold flake you'd see on a White Falcon model is an aesthetic power move. Sound-wise, it's got big, deep lungs.

Fender Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster

Perhaps the ultimate Telecaster to come out of the Fender Custom Shop, this was once a Nashville Tele with a B-bender, but has been souped-up beyond recognition. Finished in Low Rider Metallic Orange, it has an inspired pickup trio of a Lace Sensor single-coil at the bridge, P-90 in the middle and Wide Range humbucker at the neck, and a kill-switch for kicks. There is also a G bender too, and a D-Tuna style mechanism for Drop D tuning on the fly.

EFFECTS, GIZMOS, WEIRD STUFF, AND AMPLIFIERS

Peppermint Triple Tremelo

A rotating speaker unit with three types of Leslie inside, a peppermint visual display and two speeds, this was designed and built by White himself, and wired up by Johnny Walker.

Sears Silvertone 1485 6x10 amp

This was a very different beast to any of the amps manufactured by Danelectro in the '60s. The six 10" Jensen C10Q speakers in the cabinet would see to that, with a twin-power amp sections driving three speakers apiece. Alongside the faithful Fender Twin, the Silvertone was elemental in finding White's early guitar sound.

Fender Twin Reverb

The best-sounding clean amp in the world? Possibly, and it is duly sweetened by a spring reverb that is pure Americana, and the perfect platform for White's tone.

DigiTech Whammy

Offering pitch-shifting via treadle, the Whammy is arguably the greatest performance-related effects pedal of its generation and is a perennial on White's 'board. Most notably used on *Seven Nation Army*.

Electro-Harmonix POG

The POG was behind White's organ-esque tone on *Blue Orchid*, and its octave effects have become one of White's signature sounds, later inspiring his collaboration with CopperSound Pedals.

CopperSound Triplegraph

This is the archetypal White collaboration, taking one obsession – namely octave pedals – and then reaching into archive of electrical engineering to borrow a trio of Morse Code telegraph-style footswitches for a pedal that reimagines octave pedals as a concept. One switch activates an octave-up effect, the other an octave-down, with the middle switch allowing you to momentarily take your dry signal out of the effect for full-on octave madness. Alternatively, use that middle footswitch to bring in external effects and turn them on momentarily. Like the Whammy, it presents pitch-shifting in a radical, performance-facing way.

Electro-Harmonix Big Muff Pi

The last word has to go to the pedalboard staple that puts hair and teeth into White's guitar tone. You could pare his 'board down to this and a Whammy pedal and get through a White Stripes set, with the Pi serving up a hot dish of sustaining fuzz that sticks to the ribs. Ideal for a single-guitar band when you need to give your sound a sense of scale and width without losing aggression.

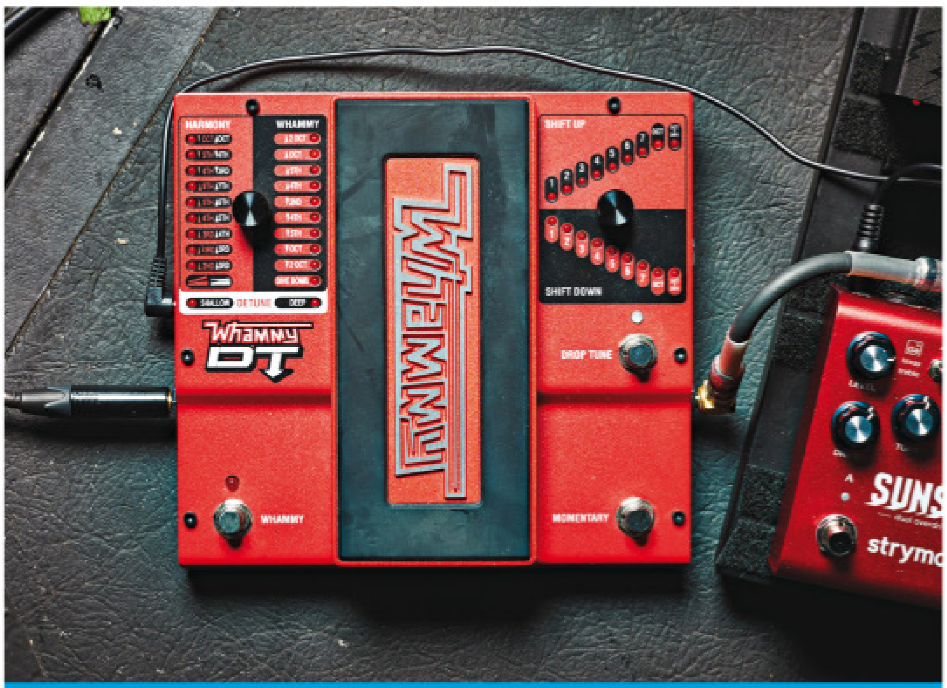
CHANGE YOUR STRIPES

Here we look at some techniques and tonal tricks to help you play like Jack

Play like Jack White… That's easy, right? Well, in some respects perhaps, yes. The open chords and basic strumming in The White Stripes' *Dead Leaves And The Dirty Ground*, for example, are achievable for all but absolute beginners.

Jack spread his guitar-playing wings with Brendan Benson in The Raconteurs, and his epic Jimmy Page-inspired solos in live shows are something to behold. But it's since 2012's solo debut, *Blunderbuss*, that his musical eccentricity and broad range of influences have truly shone through.

Still, there are consistent threads in his playing throughout his entire career – and his tone is at the heart of it. Get a ballpark White-esque tone and you'll find it easier to get a feel for his playing. Fuzz-driven, octave- and powerchord-based riffs figure highly, alongside ear-catching pentatonic and Whammy pedal-infused solos. Check out our 'Play Like Jack' tab examples complete with playing tips and tonal advice below.



SOUND ADVICE…

Essential gear tips for the Jack White tone

Jack has experimented with various pedals over the years, but these three pedals should form the core of any tribute rig.

1 ELECTRO-HARMONIX BIG MUFF PI

Wind up the distortion on this classic fuzz pedal. You're aiming for maximum compression.

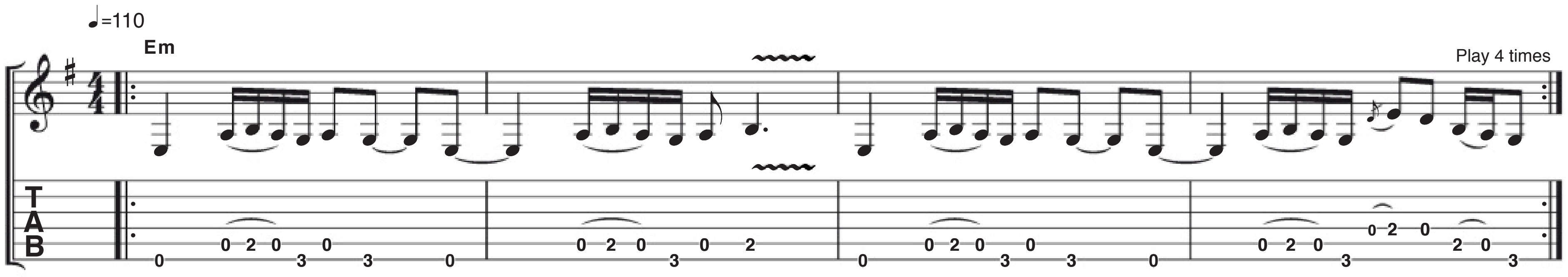
2 ELECTRO-HARMONIX POG

Used for both octave-up and octave-down sounds, it's an essential effect to have in your arsenal.

3 DIGITECH WHAMMY

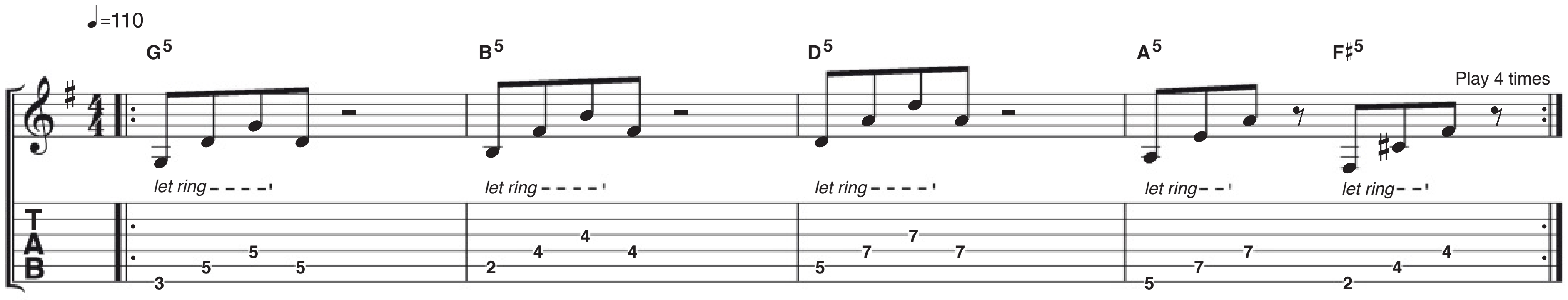
Don't own one? Any expression pedal-equipped digital multi-effects floorboard will have a similar option.

MEDIUM FUZZ AND OCTAVER



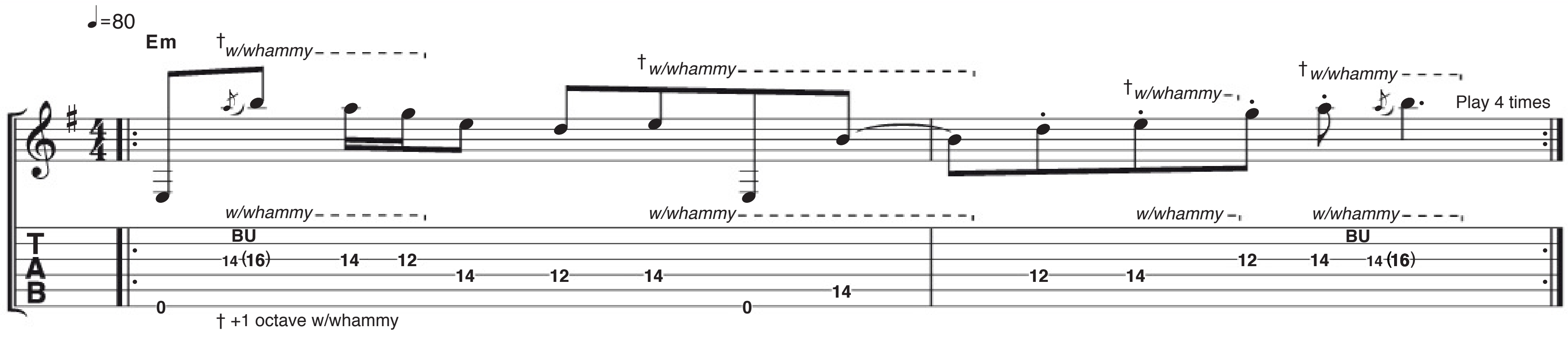
This riff is based in the E minor pentatonic scale in open position – though it's the kind of riff you can transpose to any octave and fret position. Inspired by The White Stripes' *Icky Thump* we're using a medium fuzz distortion and an octaver to round out the bottom end.

POWERCHORD ARPEGGIOS



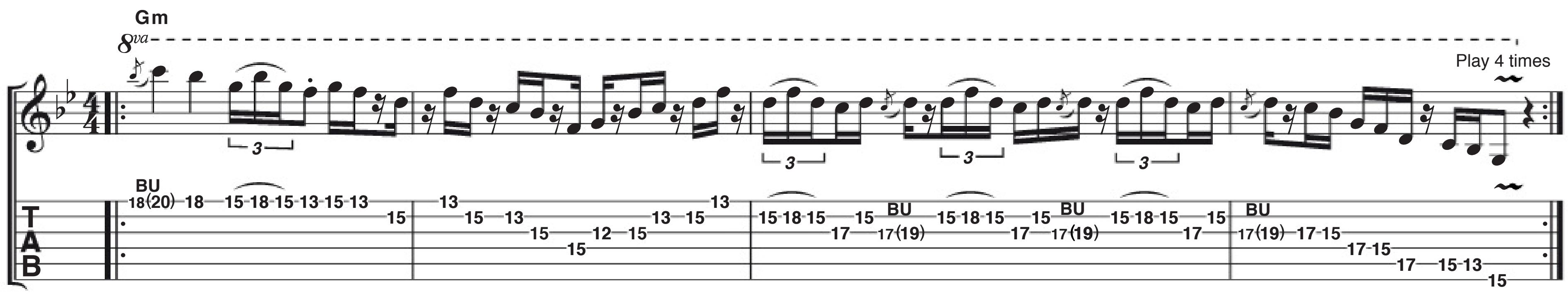
Taking our inspiration from *The Hardest Button To Button*, here we're looking at a simple idea: turning powerchords into arpeggios. If you have a looper and Whammy-style pitch shifter you could experiment by laying down a bassline underneath these shapes.

WHAMMY PEDAL SOLO



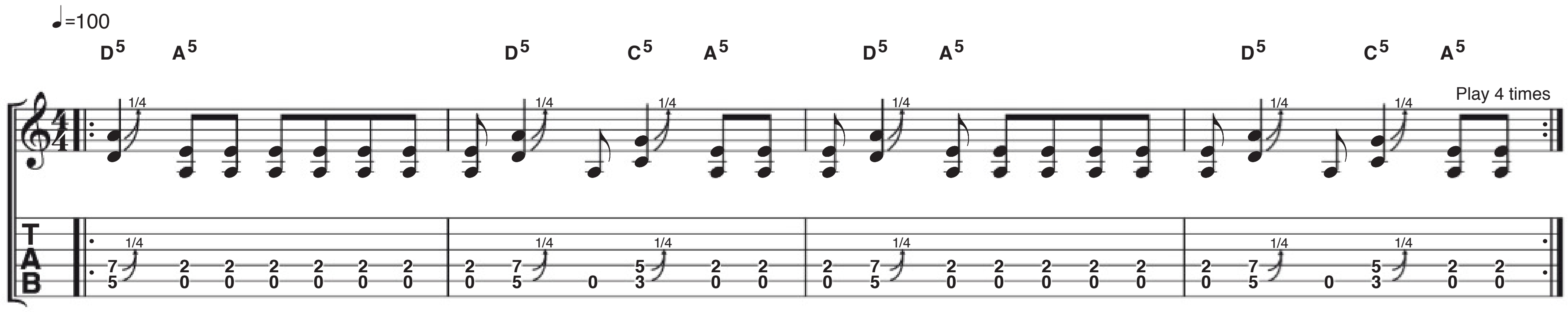
Soloing with DigiTech's Whammy pedal is Jack's stock in trade. And, though the resultant lead breaks can sound whacky, Jack's note choice is often simple bluesy pentatonics. We've indicated in the tab where to employ your Whammy. Just remember to set it to an octave above your guitar signal.

BLUESY STACCATO PHRASING



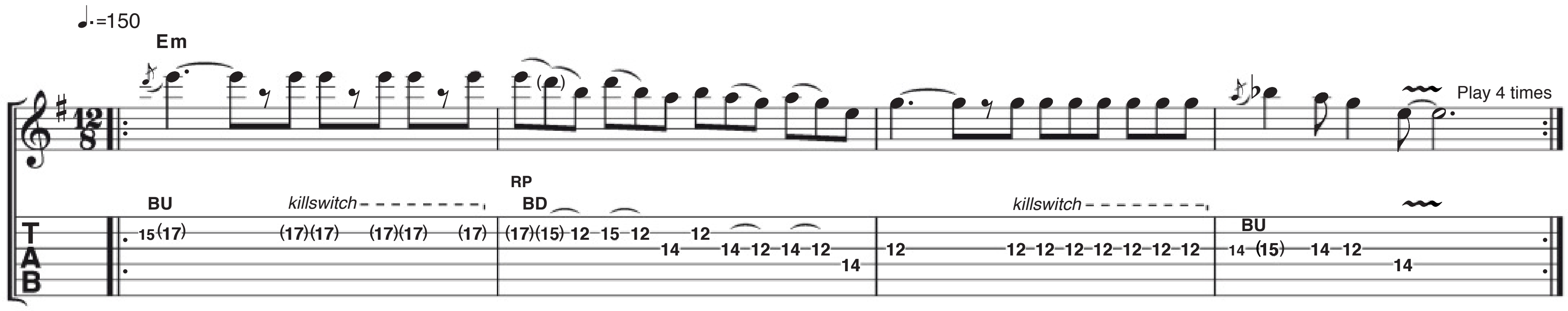
2014's *Lazaretto* is our inspiration here, where you'll find a mix of rapid-fire phrases and short, quick notes in a bluesy G minor solo. We've employed an octaver here. Unlike a Whammy effect, this is an always on pitch shifter used primarily to thicken the sound.

POWERCHORD BENDS



Play the D5 powerchord with first and third fingers here, and pull down a quarter of a tone evenly on the strings as you strum with a downstroke. It's a technique Jack applied in The White Stripes' *Black Math*.

STUTTER PICKED/KILLSWITCHED LICK



Traditionally, Jack created killswitch-style riffs using rapid-fire up-picking and fret-hand muting, known by some as stutter picking. Typically he'll use loads of fuzz distortion – the compressed sound exaggerates the dropout in the gaps, maximising the machine gun-like sound. More recently, Jack has used actual killswitches, as found in the Coppersound Triplegraph pedal and his Three-Wheel-Motion Low Rider Telecaster.

HOW TO CREATE A ROCK ANTHEM BY DEF LEPPARD

Guitarists **Phil Collen** and **Vivian Campbell** on the art of the stadium rock banger. Rule number one: "Respect the melody..."

Only four British bands have had two ten-million selling albums in America. The first three – The Beatles, Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd. And the fourth? No, not The Rolling Stones. Not The Who. Not Queen. It's Def Leppard.

Formed in Sheffield in 1977, the band rose to fame in the 80s with the two blockbuster albums that sealed their place in that exclusive club – 1983's *Pyromania* and 1987's *Hysteria*. And the key to this success is their mastery of the rock anthem – as illustrated in hit songs such as *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, *Animal*, *Photograph*, *Rocket*, *Rock Of Ages* and *Let's Get Rocked*.

This winter they head out at last for the twice-postponed Stadium Tour in the US with Mötley Crüe, Poison and Joan Jett. But while Leppard could easily tour for the rest of their lives off their back catalogue, the urge to make new music is still strong within them. "A lot of artists stop growing and creating," says guitarist Phil Collen. "We haven't."

The making of new album *Diamond Star Halos* was a first for the band – as they worked remotely from their homes, recording song ideas and individual parts on laptops, sharing material via Dropbox, which was then collated into finished tracks by the band's long-serving producer Ronan McHugh. But the band's signature sound remains very much intact on an album packed with new anthems in the classic Leppard tradition.

The first single, *Kick*, nods to their glam rock heroes from the early 70s. Even the album's title is taken from the lyrics to the T.Rex glam classic *Get It On*. And throughout the album, Phil Collen's partnership with Irish guitarist Vivian Campbell, is as strong as it's ever been – something that's evident from the get-go with the blazing trade-off solos in the opening track *Take What You Want*.

These guys have been playing together for 30 years now. Phil joined the band in 1982 during the making of *Pyromania*. Vivian joined ten years later following the death of the band's original member Steve Clark.

Creating stadium rock bangers is Def Leppard's speciality, and here, Phil and Viv present their guide to how it's done...

THE SONG IS KING

Vivian: The real reason why Def Leppard is so different to so many other bands is we know – it's not about us, it's about the songs. It's not about how well I can play guitar or how well Phil can play guitar. It's about the f*cking song. You do your guitar parts as best as you can but at the end of the day the song is going to outlive all of us.

Phil: You've got to listen to what the vocal's doing. You have to respect that main melody, and then you can alter stuff around it. It has to be within the vocal structure, because you can f*ck something up.

KNOW WHEN TO LET RIP

Phil: The reason we've played safe in the past is because you're respecting the song maybe too much. With this one, because we recorded remotely and there was no one else in the room it's like, 'F*ck it.' You can overthink and play too safe. You're like, 'I don't want to tread on anything.' With this one, I was like 'Well, I'm going to experiment. I feel this should be like this,' and go off. I'd send it to everyone then if no one says, 'That's a bit over the top!' then you're fine.

Vivian: I do feel that my playing is better than ever and certainly more comfortable. I have a lot less anxiety about it, probably because I'm doing it so much since I started Last In Line (the group he formed in 2012 with fellow ex-members of Dio – the band in which he made his name in the early 80s). The passion was reignited and I've definitely built upon it. When it came time to do guitar solos I didn't have the pressure of other people in the room. You know, 'Lunch is coming up. When is he going to do this?'

LEAVE A GAP FOR THE SNARE

TG says: In the past, Leppard learned so much from Mutt Lange, the producer of *Pyromania* and *Hysteria*. They even called him the 'sixth member' of the band. Many of Lange's hits have riffs that pause for the snare drum – check out AC/DC's *Highway To Hell* and *Back In Black* or The Cars' *You Might Think*. The same is true for Leppard's new single.

Phil: With *Kick*, I think I had the chorus and then it broke down to the verse. I wanted something with gaps, like *Pour Some Sugar On Me*. When we did that my original riff was a bit like *White Lines* by Grandmaster Flash, a continuous thing. Mutt was like, 'Oh no, man, you got to leave a gap for the snare!' That just brought it to life. I wanted to do that for the verse of *Kick*.

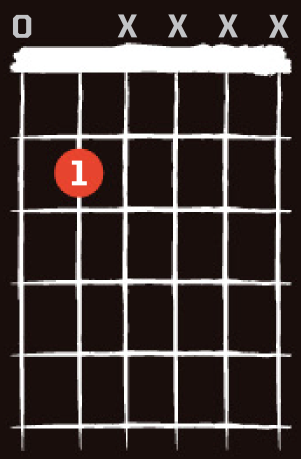
PLAYING MATTERS MORE THAN GEAR

Vivian: I moved from Los Angeles to New Hampshire, so I don't have many guitars at home. Most of my guitars are in Def Leppard's locker in southern California. It's probably just as well because there's enough choice in the drop down menu in Guitar Rig without auditioning every Les Paul again. I don't want to get into the weeds too much. It's about the performance more than the guitar, the preset or anything. To be honest, a lot of my choice came down to which guitar has the freshest strings!

Phil: On this album, I used a Squier Tele Thinline on the solo of *This Guitar*. It was just a standard thing I bought years ago in Dublin and it's just great. It's a Squier Starcaster at the beginning. And for the solo on *Gimme A Kiss*, I actually used a Squier

"I WANT LESS GEAR, NOT MORE. HOW YOU PLAY

LAYER YOUR CHORDS...



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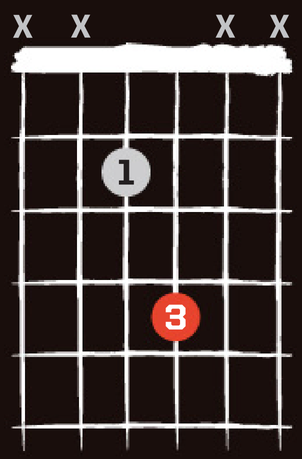

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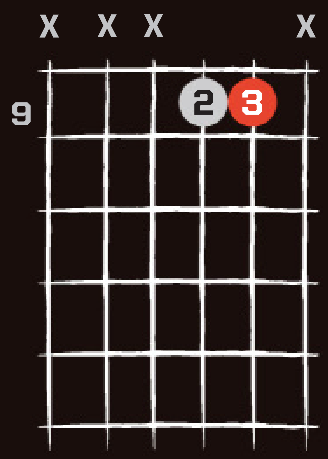

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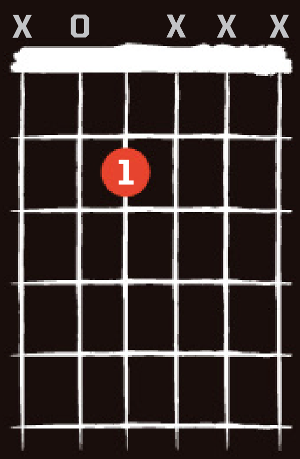

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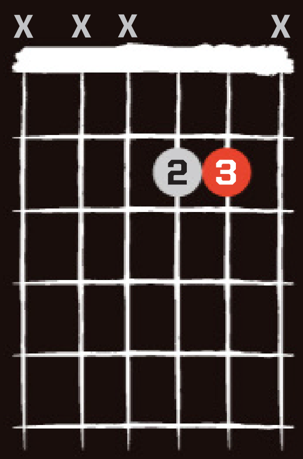

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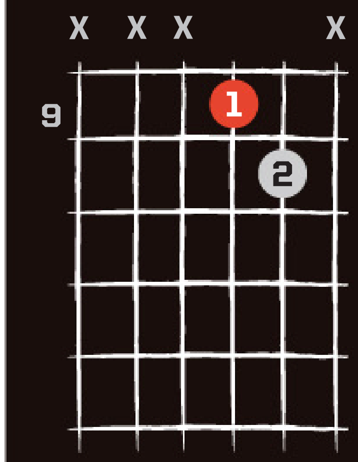

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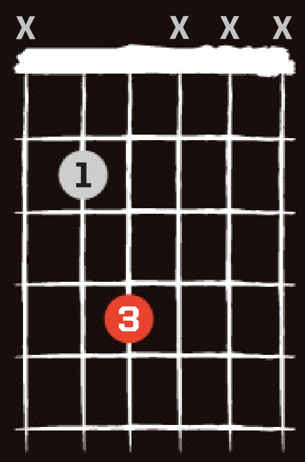

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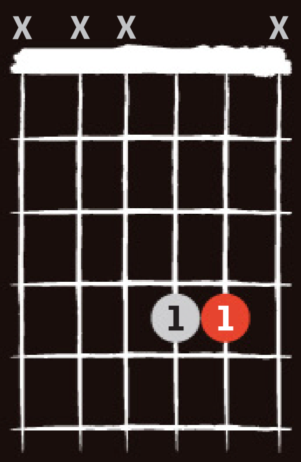

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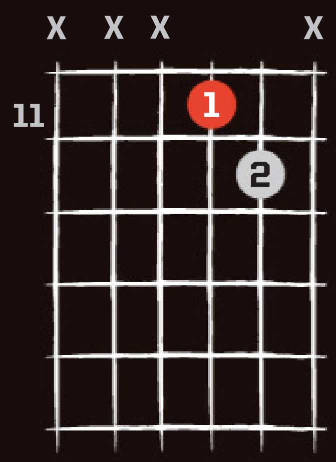

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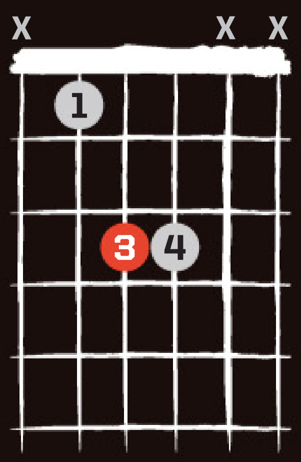

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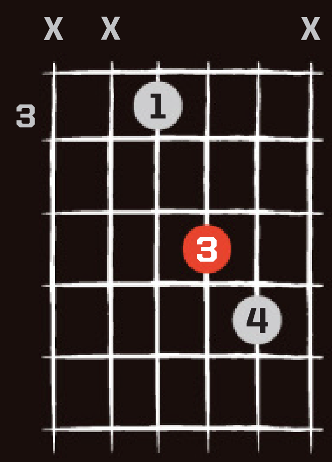

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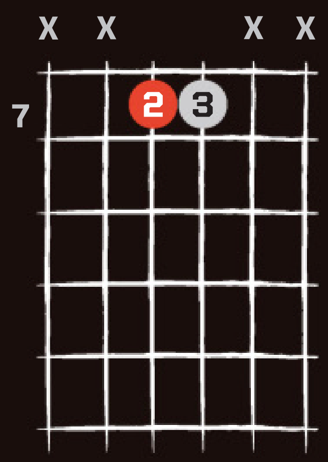
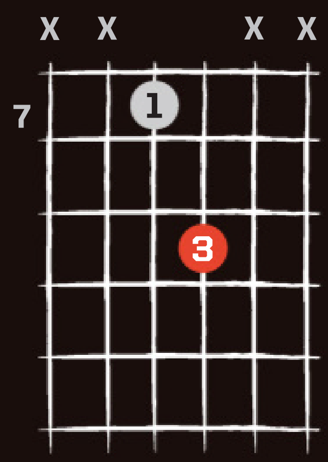


D5



A5

Vivian: In a really good Def Leppard song Phil and I are never playing the same parts. In the hard rock world there's this school of thought that you have two guitar parts playing the same thing to make it sound heavier. If I get a demo from Phil, I would never play the chords in the same register he's put them down already. I just try inversions. There's countless ways you can play a chord up the guitar neck. But the bridge section in *Hysteria* where the notes were recorded one at a time for the chord – we've never done anything like that since. I think that's too much work!

Phil: If you want to make it broader, if someone's playing a powerchord or a barre chord, and the other one's doing an open version, that sounds great. If you're playing a D you could add an A chord, you know the first and the fifth. You put the parts in different octaves and also you do a different rhythm.

TG says: In *Pour Some Sugar On Me*, the chorus has the chords E, A, and B split across multiple guitar tracks. It is possible to play all those notes on one guitar, but with distortion they can sound muddy and out of tune. Harmonised chords sound clearer, just as a Thin Lizzy-style twin guitar solo sounds clearer than playing doublestops on one distorted guitar. You can get more ambitious by layering these E- and A-shapes over each other.

Animal begins with an F5 powerchord layered over a Bb5 to create a big Bbsus2. The riff in *Photograph* includes a partial D5 chord layered with an A5, which makes Asus4. To hear parts in different octaves and with counter rhythms as Phil describes, listen to the chorus of *Hysteria* with headphones on.

GUITAR BEGINS AND ENDS WITH YOUR HANDS" VIVIAN CAMPBELL

ANIMAL INSTINCT
"You can overthink and play too safe," Phil says.

Super-Sonic with a wah.

Vivian: Do I have any more signature gear planned? God no. I want less gear, not more. How you play guitar begins and ends with your hands. The rest is just sh*t to get in the way and sh*t that's gonna go wrong.

Phil: Everything is recorded with Guitar Rig. I've been using the same main preset since 2011. I made some presets for Guitar Rig 6 but I didn't want to update my computer because I was scared it wouldn't work anymore. Sometimes I'd send Ronan [McHugh, producer] the unamped sound so he can reamp it, but with a lot of this stuff the main the demo sound is what's on the record. Live we use Fractals, and whenever I do solo gigs I use a Blackstar Silverline. There's subtle differences obviously, but it all sounds like me – it sounds exactly the same!

Vivian: Because your tone is in your hands it doesn't really matter. Phil can pick up my Les Paul, and it sounds like Phil through my gear. I've played solos before with his Jackson, like the solo in the song *Paper Sun* [from 1999's *Euphoria*]. You can hear because I forgot to turn the sustainer off and you can hear there's one point where it goes into feedback. So tone is 100 per cent in your hands.

PERFECTION SUCKS!

Phil: The intro to *Kick* was from my demo. You can hear this ringing that sounds like someone hit a jar or something. It's the guitar just overloading and peaking. We left it on because it sounds cool. The solo was a total guide, mistakes all over the place. I'm like, 'F*ck it, sounds great!' I love it just the way it is, so we left it on. Normally we do thirty tracks of a vocal harmony. On this one, some of the stuff is just me doing eight tracks. I would do a guide vocal in my echoey front room. Grab a [Shure] SM58 and just sing, like, 'I'll do it properly later on but this is how it goes.' Ronan would go 'That's great! Just use that,' and someone else would harmonise. You can actually hear everyone's voice. Joe [Elliott, vocalist] was f*cking spectacular. He was doing stuff in Dublin on his laptop with a little sh*tty mic that he does his radio show on, and that's some of the stuff that ended up on the album. That's Mutt Lange's thing. You'd say, 'It has to be perfect.' He's like 'F*ck no, I hate perfect!' He said it just has to sound and feel right.

WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE BETTER THAN YOU

Phil: It really helps me as a songwriter to write with someone who's better than me, or different to me. The speed that they do things is a little intimidating sometimes but it's just great to be around. I was writing with Sam Hollander, who wrote *High Hopes* for Panic! At The Disco. He's just awesome. It was really inspiring working with him because he's so quick firing. You know he's just writing away and just bouncing whole ideas. We had the whole thing done in an afternoon. You want to be around someone who's gonna do that. When I did the G3 tour with Satriani and Petrucci. We were doing *Highway Star* and from the first rehearsal I was like 'F*ck, I'm gonna have to practice a lot more because I'm just gonna get left behind by these guys.' They're just it's so far over the top. John goes, 'Well, if I do this harmony, Phil, you can do this.' It was further than I'd ever stretched on anything I'd ever done. I love someone giving you a helping hand and pushing you at the same time.

"ONE OF MY SOLOS WAS A TOTAL GUIDE, MISTAKES ALL

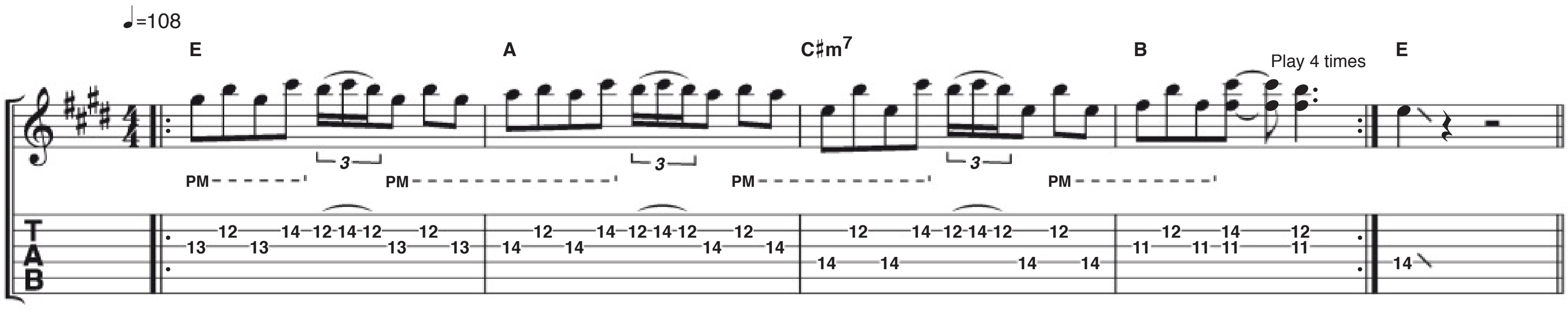
CREATE HOOKS EVERYWHERE

Phil: I always go back to Killer Queen (a number 2 UK hit for Queen in 1974). There's a hook almost like every two bars or something!

Vivian: In Def Leppard world we wouldn't be very excited about just power chords. Normally we'd be looking for a jangle to go on top. The jangle is what starts to elevate it to something other than the ordinary. That's not just a chord thing. We're looking for a part to go on top of that.

Phil: You can even do lead parts around the vocal, but you have to have that bedrock there. On the title track from *Hysteria* we had the vocal melody beforehand and Steve (Clark) would come up with something different. Again, it's got to respect the melody. As Keith Richards so eloquently put it, weaving sonic tapestries.

DEF LEPPARD STYLE 'HOOKY' LEAD



TG SAYS: 'The jangle' can be distorted arpeggios (***Let's Get Rocked***), clean arpeggios (*Photograph*), or jamming on a ringing open string (*Pour Some Sugar On Me*). Check out *Love Bites*, *Hysteria* and *Animal* for lead guitar hooks that fit around the vocal. Our tab example shows how Leppard write lead parts around chord progressions. One note changes on each repeat to fit the chord changes, but that note isn't necessarily a root note. Over the E chord, the lick starts on G# (the major 3rd) and moves smoothly up one fret to A when the chord changes to A major.

OVER THE PLACE – BUT IT SOUNDS GREAT!" **PHIL COLLEN**

OUTPUT
ECHO
DELAY
TAP

Guitars and backing Charlie Griffiths

DELAY TACTICS

Transform your tone with the atmosphere, rhythm and space that only a delay pedal can give

Defined as the distinct repetition of sound, dedicated delay effects were first seen in recording studios in the 1950s in the shape of cumbersome tape-echo units that used reels of magnetic tape (just like an old audio cassette) to record and play back sound. Solid-state technology brought delay to a more practical stompbox format in the 1970s. And, although many of the most common delays these days are digital, many replicate the natural warmth and grain of much-loved early tape echoes and analogue pedals.

Here, we're looking at five ways to use the effect, from epic atmospherics and post-rock ambience to synth-like swells and timed rhythmic parts. On the subject of timed delays, you'll need solid rhythm skills, of course, but also an understanding of how delay time (usually expressed in milliseconds) relates to musical tempo (expressed as beats per minute). Read on, as we cover what you need to know.

DELAY ESSENTIALS

Don't delay! Cover some basics with our brief jargon buster

PEDAL TERMINOLOGY

Feedback: Feedback refers to the number of times your signal repeats. Depending on your pedal, it can vary from one repeat to infinite echoes.

Time (aka rate): Every pedal allows you to control how fast the echoes come. Some pedals display measurements in milliseconds. Others require you to use your ear.

Tap tempo: This manually syncs the time of your delay to the song you're playing. In most cases you'll simply stomp on a footswitch in time with the music.

Mix (aka effect level): This knob controls how loud your guitar's repeats are compared to the input signal.

Analogue delay: Analogue delay pedals use a so-called Bucket Brigade chip – a capacitor array that gives them a distinctively dark sound that's increasingly lo-fi as you apply longer delay settings.

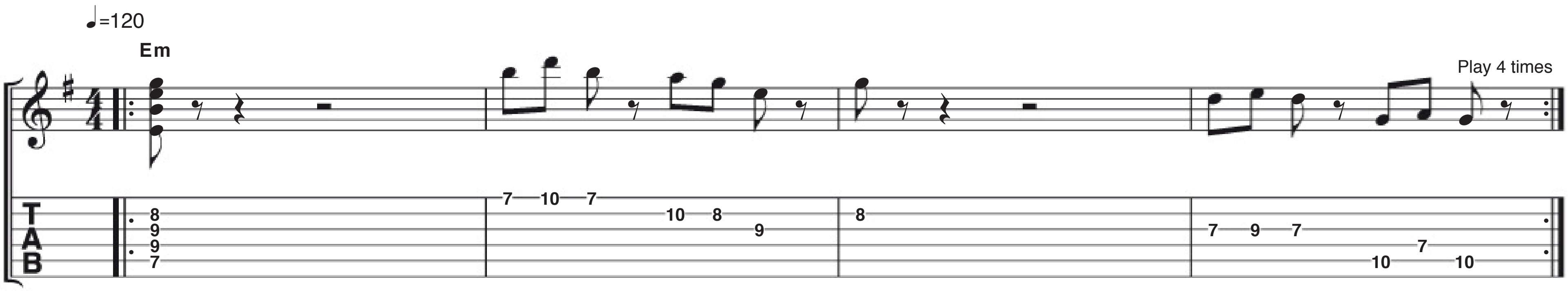
Digital delay: Digital delays are generally more pristine in timbre than the analogue kind. Depending on who you ask, you might hear them described as brighter, or even clinical. Some pedals, like the Boss DD-3, deliver a distinctive tone of their own that sits somewhere between clinical and the darker, grungier tone of an analogue delay. Fully featured digital units emulating classic delays are commonplace.

Timed delay: A quick look at delay time (in ms) at different musical tempos (bpm) will give you an idea of how they relate to a song's speed and rhythm:

120bpm:	500ms (quarter note)	250ms (eighth note)	125ms (16th note)
90bpm:	667ms (quarter note)	333ms (eighth note)	222ms (16th note)
60bpm:	1000ms (quarter note)	500ms (eighth note)	250ms (16th note)

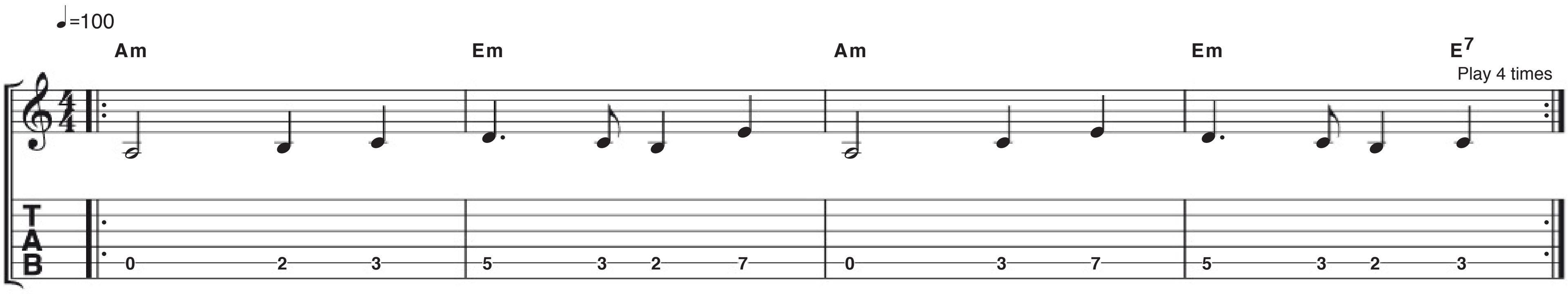
Dotted eighth-note delay: You need to understand a nugget of music theory to employ the classic dotted eighth-note delay. A standard quarter-note rhythm is counted '1 2 3 4'. Eighth notes are twice the speed, and you'd count '1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &' to keep time. A dotted eighth is equal to 1.5 eighth notes. So, if you set a delay to a dotted eighth the repeats fall halfway between the eighth notes you play, giving a cascading run of evenly timed 16th notes.

01 TIMED REPEATS



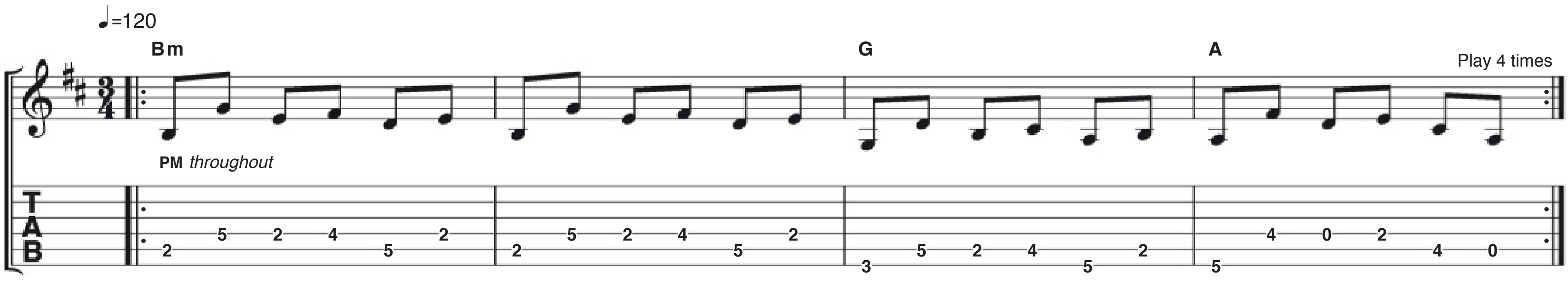
Our first example is inspired by *The Adults Are Talking* by The Strokes, and, like the New York quintet, we're using delay to add timed, rhythmic repeats in the gaps. That means we need to match the delay time to the tempo of the track. Our track is at 160bpm, so a delay time of 375ms ensures the repeats land on the downbeat.

02 AMBIENT WET SOUND



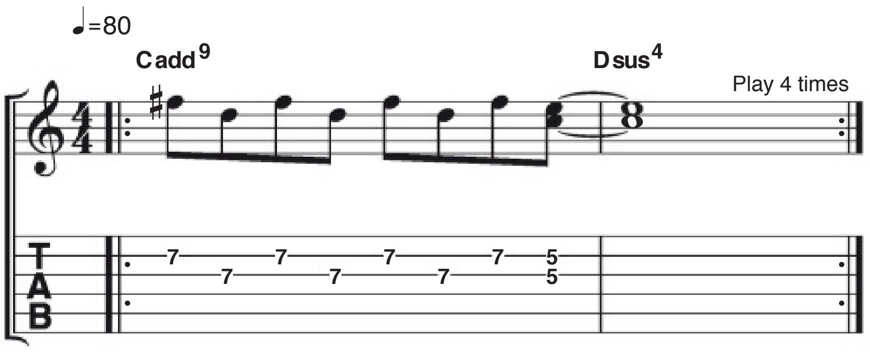
Here we use the delay to create a spooky ambient effect in the vein of the Arctic Monkeys' *Dance Little Liar*. The delay is set to an eighth-note repeat (300ms, to match our track's 100bpm tempo) with the feedback set to two repeats. We've kept the effect level high (70%) for that ambient 'wet' sound.

03 DOTTED EIGHTH-NOTE DELAY



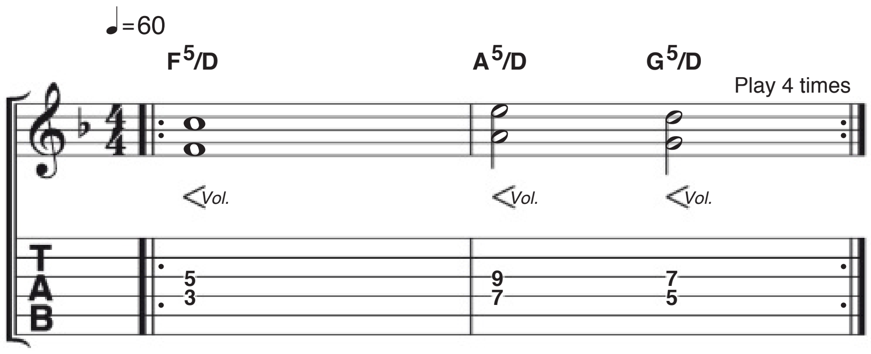
This rhythmic effect appears in Buckethead's *Big Sur Moon* and Dream Theater's *Lifting Shadows Off A Dream*. These riffs are played as an even run of eighth notes, but the repeats are set to *dotted* eighth notes, so the echoes are heard in between the played notes. Our example is at 120bpm and the delay time is 375ms. The effect level is identical to the dry guitar sound.

04 GRADUAL FADE OUTS



Devin Townsend uses long delays for ambience and weight in songs like *Greetings* and *Truth*. In our example, the delay is set to a quarter-note triplet repeat, (500ms at 80bpm). Set a long feedback to allow the notes to gradually fade away.

05 DUAL-DELAYED SYNTH PAD EFFECT



In this Tool-inspired part there are two separate delays which combine to create a smooth synth-pad-like effect. One delay is set to an eighth note (500ms) and the other is a quarter-note delay (1000ms), both with the feedback set as high as possible.

Words Alex Lynham

PEDAL SHOPPING-PING-PING!

Build your 'board with TG's delay pedal recommendations...

BOSS DD-3T

A classic all-round delay pedal

Type: Digital

The Boss DD-3 has been a staple digital delay for 30 years, and the reason is no secret – it sounds amazing. Pristine delays, a pleasant timbre, and an EQ profile that works equally well in a band context or studio mix, make this a no-brainer for everybody from bedroom musicians to pros. With this latest version, Boss has added a tap-tempo input, allowing you to use an external tap source to control the delay time.

CHECK
E.LEVEL
FEEDBACK
TIME
SHORT LOOP
L.800ms
M.200ms
S.50ms
MODE
SET TEMPO: HOLD
OUTPUT
INPUT
DIRECT OUT
TEMPO
Digital Delay
DD-3T
BOSS

TC ELECTRONIC FLASHBACK 2

Options galore and expression functionality, too

Type: Digital

With a decent range of presets that cover all the basics – analogue delay, tape echo, a pristine digital mode and some more sound effect-type delays, the TC Flashback 2 is an impressive piece of kit for the money. In addition to the basic feature list, it has user presets assignable via TC's powerful Toneprint software, as well as a built-in hardware expression pedal. It sounds great, with a warm, organic timbre whatever the patch.

DELAY
FEEDBACK
MASH
LEVEL
MOD
CRYS
RVS
DYN
LOOP
TAPE
ANA
2290
STEREO OUT MONO
IN
FLASHBACK
DELAY AND LOOPER
TRUE BYPASS
tc electronic

9V
DELAY
DEPTH
BLEND
FEED BACK
VIBRATO
EXP. PEDAL
CHORUS
EXP. PEDAL
OUTPUT
INPUT
MEMORY BOY
analog delay
electro-harmonix
MADE IN NYC, USA

ELECTRO-HARMONIX MEMORY BOY

Multiple modes and a dark, characterful sound

Type: Analogue

The Memory Boy is EHX's mid-range analogue offering. As you'd expect from an analogue delay, it's dark but characterful, giving a lush and organic delay sound. In terms of parameters, it's small but powerful, with modulation built in, and several modes to change the style of modulation applied to the echoes. The combination of value for money and excellent core tone make it a winner.

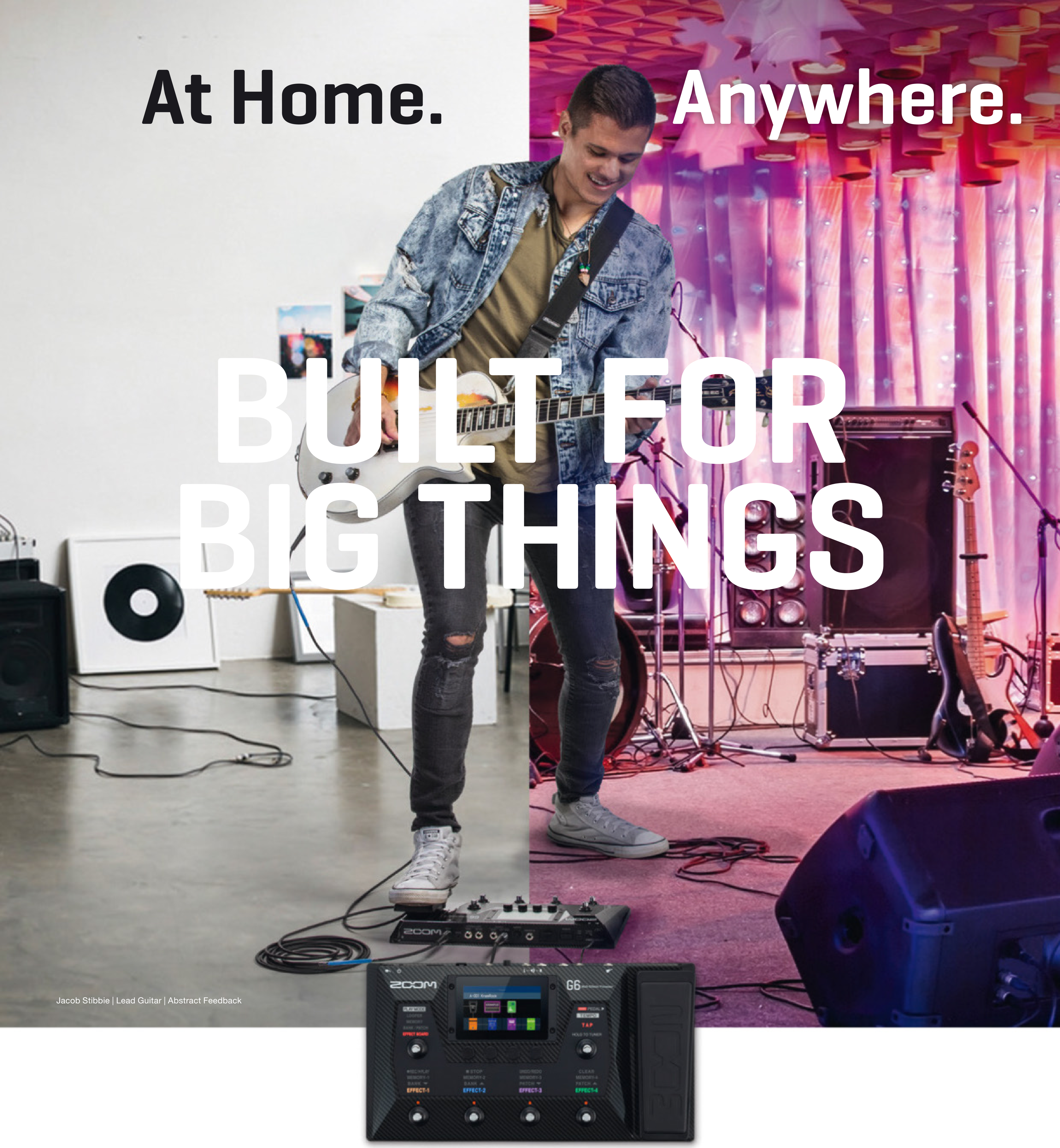
MOD
MIX
REGEN
DELAY
OUTPUT
INPUT
MXR
carbon copy
analog delay

MXR CARBON COPY

Pure, lush analogue delay

Type: Analogue

With its gorgeous built-in modulation, the MXR Carbon Copy is a superbly distinctive- sounding pedal. Although it shines when used for a variety of different uses, it's probably most at home in the shoegaze, dream pop and ambient genres, even cropping up on a lot of post-rock guitarists' pedalboards. As you'd expect, it's a heavy-hitter on its own, but it also stacks well with other delays and creates gorgeous pad-like echoes when placed after a drive.


At Home.
Anywhere.
BUILT FOR BIG THINGS
Jacob Stibbie | Lead Guitar | Abstract Feedback

INTRODUCING THE NEW ZOOM G6 MULTI-EFFECTS PROCESSOR

With state of the art amp modeling, powerful multi effects, and a touch screen interface, the G6 delivers what you need to take your sound with you, anywhere you go.

ZOOM® | We're For Creators®

Words Ellie Rogers **Portraits** Jeremy Saffer

"I have this whole other side of my musical personality"

METALLICA GUITARIST **KIRK HAMMETT** IS EXPLORING NEW SOUNDS ON HIS FIRST SOLO PROJECT. HIS AIM: "TO DO SOMETHING THAT'S NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE..."

As lead guitarist of one of the biggest-selling bands in history, Kirk Hammett needs little in the way of an introduction. While Metallica have been teasing fans with the promise of a new album since last summer, Kirk has emerged as the first band member to step from the mothership and fly solo with his new four-track, horror movie-influenced EP *Portals*.

Originally conceived as "background music" to accompany his It's Alive! exhibition of horror flick posters and memorabilia, *Portals*, explains Kirk, evolved to become a collection of "soundtracks to the movies in your mind".

Produced by Kirk, the EP is comprised of four high-concept instrumental tracks: *Maiden And The Monster*, *The Jinn*, *High Plains Drifter* and *The Incantation* – each inspired by a different era in horror movie history. The latter two tracks were co-written by conductor Edwin Outwater, whom Kirk first met while working on Metallica's *S&M2* concerts, and who leads orchestral players from the LA Philharmonic to give *Portals* its baroque-meets-metal aesthetic.

Speaking from his home in San Francisco, Kirk discusses the origins of his new music and his go-to gear for these new recordings. And yes, he says, there is a new Metallica album in progress...

After working as part of a unit for so long, what's it been like to head out in your own creative direction?

It's something that I've been living with for a long time. You know, I have this whole other side of my musical personality, but I've never had a real platform to express it. Now I do and I'm really happy about that. It's pretty weird because usually, at this point with an album release, it's not just me, it's the four of us, and we have each other's backs and we're supporting each other. But this time, taking it all on by myself, I feel a little bit naked and a little bit insecure. When I'm feeling that way, that's when I need to take a step back and say, 'It's okay to believe in the music,' and that gets me through all those feelings of self-doubt.

How did the idea for *Portals* come about?

It never started with the intent of this stuff becoming part of an album and being released as a solo project. The first couple of songs – *Maiden And The Monster* and *The Jinn* – were my attempt to write background music for my museum show of horror movie posters, and that turned into something else. Then I met Edwin Outwater working on *S&M2*. He's a big horror fan and I am as well, so I said to him, 'Let's collaborate on

"I'LL LISTEN TO A PIECE OF CLASSICAL MUSIC AND PRETEND EVERY INSTRUMENT IS THE ELECTRIC GUITAR"

"WHITE ZOMBIE"
BELA (DRACULA) LUGOSI
a VICTOR and EDWARD HALPERIN PRODUCTION
RELEASED BY UNITED ARTISTS

MASTER! MASTER! Kirk in his natural habitat, on stage with Metallica.

something and make it horror movie–influenced and cinematic.' That's where *High Plains Drifter* and *The Incantation* came from. It's funny, I have these four pieces of music, and I still don't have any background music for the exhibition – I just realised that!

Portals combines both, but which came first, your love of guitar or your love of horror?

That's an interesting one because when I think about it, they both happened around the same time. I saw my first horror movie when I was five years old. It was *The Day Of The Triffids*. Also, I remember, at four or five years old, being aware of music and the radio, and my sister going around singing Beatles songs. So, I think they both kind of crystallised inside of me around the same time. When I was fifteen years old, I got hold of a guitar, and acted upon another love of mine that is just as intense as horror movies, and it became another obsession. It was a natural progression for me to bring the two together. My first attempts at that were designing these guitars with horror movie posters on them like my Mummy, Frankenstein, Dracula and Nosferatu guitars. That was a cool way of bringing the two genres together, and so when I wrote *Maiden And The Monster*, it occurred to me that I could do the same thing musically, and knowing that was a huge lightning bolt of inspiration and creative determination. I sat down, and the first thing I played was that arpeggiated part in *Maiden And The Monster*. I started playing chromatic. It's a C#m7 chord going chromatically from C# to Cmaj7 to B5 and back to Cmaj7, and that was the basis of *Maiden And The Monster* – everything came out of that simple progression.

What were the main musical influences for *Portals*?

I've been listening to a ton of classical music for what seems like forever and ever now. I just love it. One of my favourite things to do is sit down and listen to a piece of classical music and pretend every instrument is the electric guitar, and it's amazing how everything kind of changes. So, classical music has been a big influence on me. Also prog. I discovered prog three or four years ago and, oh my God, I can't believe that I missed out on so many great prog albums all this time! I can definitely see a line where late 60s and early 70s prog is really instrumental in influencing hard rock and heavy metal. So there's a huge prog influence on this EP.

What did you want to get out of working with players from the L.A. Philharmonic?

The timbre of classical music, for me, is so beautiful. There's a completely different colour that's found in so many different ways with classical instruments. A cello through a PA might be one of the heaviest things I've ever heard in my life. I wanted to really take advantage of that and exploit that in these tunes.

How did writing instrumental music change your approach?

It was great that I was able to get out of that structure of riff, verse, chorus, huge middle part, then back to the riff, verse and chorus. I'm glad I was freed of that and free to go wherever the music wanted to go. That's pretty much how these arrangements came about. The whole process was a lot simpler and a lot smoother than I expected it to be, and I can tell you one hundred percent that it sounds a lot more complicated than it was to make or record, and that really is a beautiful thing.

Back in the day, you took lessons with Joe Satriani, the godfather of narrative instrumental rock. Did any of his words of wisdom come flooding back when you were making *Portals*?

Joe's influence is just in me. It's part of my guitar style because he showed me all these different exercises. He showed me modal thinking and music theory, how to get melodies out of certain chords and how to make chords out of certain melodies. All that stuff that he taught me way back is still with me to this day. That stuff will always be a part of me, and it'll never ever go away because it's intrinsic in the way I express myself, and I'm so grateful to Joe for giving me those tools.

Photos Adam Gasson / Jesse Wild / Kevin Nixon

RELOAD
"There's all different types of music that I'm sitting on, and it's a lot of varied stuff," Kirk says.

Which of your guitars did you use on the EP?

I used Greeny, of course [the Les Paul named after its previous owner Peter Green, and later owned by Gary Moore]. Then I used my natural finish ESP Ouija guitar for a lot of the cleaner stuff, and an Olympic White 1964 Fender Strat for some of the arpeggiated stuff. I used a Teuffel Tesla guitar, which is a guitar made by Ulrich Teuffel in Germany. He makes amazing guitars. That guitar is very unusual and it's not really something I play a lot, but I love his guitars and I love what his guitars do. The Tesla has a lot of things I don't usually use. For one, it doesn't have a headstock. Two, it has a Kahler, and three, it has one of those kill switches that a lot of other guitar players use a lot. I used that on *The Incantation*. It was drop tuned – I dropped the E to a D. I also used a Fender Acoustasonic – you know, those new ones. It was a Strat Acoustasonic, and I'm so pleased with those. I also used a Martin D-28.

Is that a sitar we hear on *The Incantation*?

Yeah! I'd bought a cheap Danelectro sitar for five hundred bucks and played it on the demo. Then when it came time to record the actual track, I said to my equipment guy, 'Send me down that sitar,' but he sent the wrong one. He sent this Coral Electric Sitar from the 60s that I'd used on *Wherever I May Roam* [from 1991's *Metallica*] and a few other things. That was the fancy sitar, and I didn't mean for the fancy sitar to come down, but it came down anyway so I used it!

What about other gear?

Amp-wise, I used a Mesa Boogie called the Triple Crown, which isn't available now. It was a model Boogie made for a hot second. I used that in conjunction with a 1974 Model Marshall Plexi from like, 1969. That Plexi is well known in L.A. and makes the rounds through all the studios. I rented it, but I blended it with the Boogie to get a different sound. And of course, I used my Wah pedal. I also used a Boss Chorus pedal, which is something I don't really use a lot, but I started using it on a couple tracks just for a different kind of augmentation. I really, really like chorusing. I also used a Gretsch on *High Plains Drifter*, a Fender Deluxe, and a Rotovibe. That Fender Deluxe was from 1954 or something – you know, the old tweed. It's so beat up, it's ugly. I call it 'The Phantom' because it's so ugly, but it sounds amazing!

You were quite restrained in terms of pedals and effects...

I tend to be pretty conservative when it comes to effecting the sound, and it's all because I just love the sound of a guitar through an amp. Sometimes, when I try to colour it up with effects, I don't like it. I just love the purity of guitar. Don't get me wrong, I love effects and I have a ton of pedals, but sometimes it's hard for me to integrate successfully, or it's hard for me to use them on a sensible level where it really augments the part. Just putting a pedal on there for novelty – I don't believe in that.

Is soundtrack work something we'll see you do more of?

Yeah, absolutely. That's pretty much in the cards and it's pretty much a given for the future. I was pretty active during Covid, writing a ton of different types of music. I wrote Metallica music, I wrote the *Portals* music – all different types of music that I'm sitting on, and it's a lot of varied stuff. I can safely say that I'm not done writing this type of music because I really, really enjoy it and it feels different. Going back to Joe Satriani and the way he does his albums – his approach is very traditional, and I purposely stayed away from that. What happened when he started putting out albums was he created a template for a lot of other guitarists to copy on their own solo albums. That's great – I'm not knocking that – but I just wanted to do something that's never been done before.

Do you have an update on when we can expect a new Metallica album?

Well, let's just say that over the Covid years, we weren't just sitting around on the couch texting each other, complaining about how we couldn't work. That was the exact opposite of what happened! We've been working through the lost years – so you can draw your own conclusions from that!

> "I HAVE A TON OF PEDALS, BUT I JUST LOVE THE PURITY OF A GUITAR THROUGH AN AMP"

Interview Amit Sharma

“You get this huge spread that’s not possible on a six-string…”

THE EIGHT-STRING GUITAR OPENS UP A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES. TWO OF ITS LEADING EXPONENTS – **MÅRTEN HAGSTRÖM** OF **MESHUGGAH** AND **TOSIN ABASI** FROM **ANIMALS AS LEADERS** – REVEAL ALL

In 2020 the art of eight-string guitar is in rude health. This was once an incredibly obscure instrument, with roots going as far back as 19th century classical music. But since 2007, when Ibanez launched the RG2228, the first mass-produced eight-string, its popularity has grown and grown. You can easily find an eight-string in most first-hand guitar shops.

This popularity is mainly thanks to metal bands who called for lower and thicker tunings to take their imaginations to the extreme - foremost among them Meshuggah, math-metal pioneers from Sweden, and Animals As Leaders, masters of instrumental tech-metal from Washington D.C. In both bands’ new albums, the extended range of the eight-string is explored by two guitarists: Mårten Hagström and Fredrik Thordendal on Meshuggah’s *Immutable*; Tosin Abasi and Javier Reyes on Animals As Leaders’ *Parrhesia*.

In conversation, Mårten and Tosin reveal the secrets to mastering this instrument – and what it gives them in terms of creativity…

What have you both learned about getting more mileage out of an eight-string?

Tosin: That’s an important question, because a lot of people might be looking at their guitars from a six-string perspective. Ultimately, the six-string can be the core of how you understand an eight-string, especially if you retain standard tuning. We often tune our eight-strings to drop E, so you can still perceive it as a six-string in standard tuning. All scales and shapes repeat per octave, so it’s good to acknowledge the repetition within the fingerboard. Imagine if you’re playing an A power chord on the fifth fret on your sixth string – with our tuning, if you barre all the way down, you have another fifth interval and a low octave. It’s like drop D, because those three strings give you a functional chord. That helps retain orientation. You can use lower notes in the same positions, while also finding higher notes to create more width and distance.

Mårten: We didn’t have an engineering masterplan or any idea how to go about using eight-strings. With Meshuggah, it’s always been about finding unique sounds. So we learned how to play eight-strings as we were learning how to compose with them. Our technique is something we manufactured as we went along. The best advice I can give is find how the extended range can benefit your style. That’s what worked for us. It affected how we attack the strings and how we write riffs. It was all about new atmospheres and avenues that weren’t available on a six-string. Start thinking about what the extended range can actually enhance. To be honest, we would have loved to continue using baritones and seven-strings. We didn’t neccessarily want to add extra strings, but we knew we liked the tone.

A lot of players find the jump from six to seven easy enough, but eight is an entirely different ball game…

Mårten: I think the beauty of eight-strings is that it takes away the normal aspects of

EIGHT BALLER
Mårten Hagström (right) on stage with Meshuggah

guitar playing – they can feel huge, like playing a piano. There are a lot of adjustments in terms of angles, like with your wrist and picking technique… all these small things you have to get used to. As you said, if you play a six-string, everything will transpose pretty nicely onto a seven. Eights are a different matter. For me, it's all about being comfortable with the tone. Sometimes I hear eight-string stuff and it sounds like someone's just detuned something. And other times I will hear someone actually utilising what the instrument can do.

Tosin: It's all about taking the chord voicings you know and adapting them to the eight-string, and using octave displacement. You can also have a lot of fun using the low E as a pedal tone in your riffs, using other chords to superimpose against it, like a G major. There are a lot of options out there. I like to make use of the full range of the eight-string, almost like a piano or harp. You get this huge spread that's not possible on a six-string. Think of it as an opportunity to use three-octave chords. Other times, it's fun to just turn it up and play your favourite Meshuggah riffs!

Mårten, you were experimenting with eight-strings as far as back 2002 – they were the stuff of legend back then.

Mårten: We started discussing different ways to come up with new things after touring the [1998] *Chaosphere* album. We wondered what would happen if we recorded three bass guitars, for example. Just to see how different the band would sound. Randomly we ended up talking to a guy from Nevborn Guitars, who wanted us to try out their eight-string prototypes, though we were actually already working with Ibanez on custom seven-strings at the time. It was far from finished, but me and Fredrik found that his eight-string lent itself well to playing differently.

In what sense?

Mårten: We quickly figured out that powerchord chugging and riffing didn't really work, it wasn't as simple as transposing ideas down to the eighth string. The tone of the instrument lent itself better to the single-string stuff we're known for. For us it was like, 'Wow, this is a new tool that makes us sound different!' We sounded deeper and started to write unusual things that seemed to capture the imagination, with this whole other kind of sound. We then started write things for the eight-string before we even owned one. We would tune down our seven-strings, the entire [2002] *Nothing* record is an eight-string album recorded on seven-string guitars… which was a bitch! We would play four bars and then need to retune, again and again.

Tosin, you launched your own guitar company, Abasi Concepts, in 2019 and with great success – most of your models are currently sold out. What have you learned about making extended range instruments along the way?

Tosin: Manufacturing high-end instruments is a challenge. The standard that guitarists expect is very high, and it should be! We've created an eight-string design that feels more approachable and guitar-like than the others out there. That was the starting point: a guitar that didn't feel like playing leads on a surfboard. It had to encourage people to play complex things, sounding incredible both clean and heavy. It also had to look modern – it's hard to introduce a new body shape that doesn't turn players off, so we designed something that felt bold and noticeable but not too alien. We're trying to distill what makes a guitar desirable. What is mojo? Why would you choose an Abasi over something else? It boils down to wood selection, like more stable and lightweight roasted woods which translate as a guitar that feels more alive, and pickups like the [Fishman] Fluence stuff, where you get a noiseless single coil with multiple voicings. It's been fun. Gary Clark Jr. bought one of our guitars [a six-string Space T] and we didn't even know. I had to reach out to him afterwards!

Both of your bands are known for unusual time signatures – or at least odd-time riffs against steady 4/4 beats…

Mårten: A song like *Bleed* [from 2008 album *obZen*] sounds tricky but it's actually pretty simple. It's triplets in odd groupings over a 4/4 beat, with added strokes to make the rhythm move. That's something we do a lot in our riffs, it's that the awkward, funky groove that comes out when we write. The problem with playing triplets for seven and a half minutes is consistency. Being technically able to play them in a relaxed manner for that long, as if you were playing an AC/DC song, is the challenge. So the hardest thing isn't the timings themselves, it's the parts that are like 92 notes in a row that never repeat, like we did on [2005 album] *Catch Thirtythree*. It's the faster songs that have 16 full bars before coming back to the one. It can be tricky for the

"THE BEAUTY OF EIGHT-STRINGS IS THAT IT TAKES AWAY THE NORMAL ASPECTS OF GUITAR PLAYING" MÅRTEN HAGSTRÖM

Photos Jesse Wild/Getty

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SHOCK TACTICS
"I love rhythmic and melodic surprises," says Animals As Leaders' Tosin Abasi

mind, especially when they only change ever so slightly. It might sound like the same riff over and over, but there are subtle differences. You can easily get lost. It's like, 'Man, is this the one here or do we have another bar to go?' Keeping track is the hardest part, but it's often over straight 4/4… just like AC/DC!

Tosin: There's a thing I do quite a lot which is play in 4/4 but I'll make the end a little longer, maybe for another quarter note, so now you're in a measure of five. But the general sense of the phrase feels like it's in 4/4 and repeats evenly. It's all about arbitrarily extending or shortening the length of certain phrases. I like to do it because it rubs expectation. The evenness of rhythm is something so deeply intuitive that we all expect to be able to tap along or nod our heads. But I love rhythmic and melodic surprises. I'll come up with something that feels graspable, then I might add the complexity in, maybe every other repeat there's one less quarter note than before or I might extend the phrase a few more notes into the next octave. It can technically be 4/4 but exploring these ideas means you can sound like it's something way outside. The trick is to count in longer chunks.

Both of you have new albums out. What gear are we hearing on the recordings?

Mårten: In the studio, most of our albums have fallen back on Dual Rectifiers. Those are the go-to amps for us. This time I found the EVH 5150 III 100-Watt heads to be exactly what we were looking for. They had the gain, control and Mesa/Boogie-ness we needed, but with a more raw and unbridled kind of tone. They sounded less predictable, more organic. Instead of the usual Fortin 33 pedal as a booster, I actually ended up using Misha Mansoor's Precision Drive. That was suggested by our singer [Jens Kidman], as he had one. The gate on it isn't really all that good, it's cool for live use but in the studio it needs some work. But the sound of the Precision Drive going into the EVH was super. I would use the preamp of the EVH's second channel and run it through the power amp of a Mesa/Boogie Roadster, then out through EVH cabs. For the clean parts, I used my Roland JC-120 head.

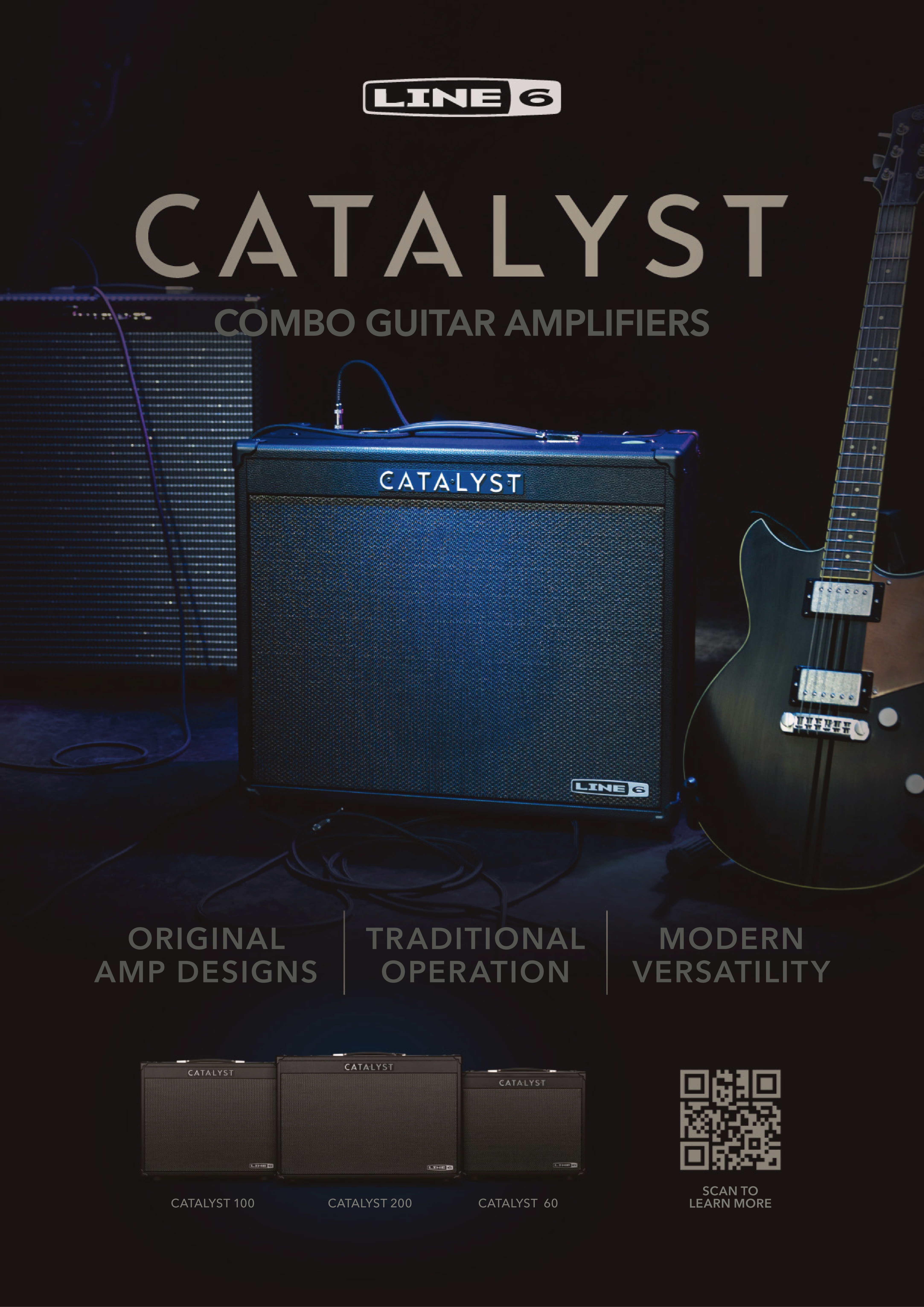
Tosin: We began production for this album with my Neural DSP plug-in, but when it came time to mix we decided to take the DIs and see what kind of results we'd get by experimenting with real amps, cabs and mics. We started with my Morgan SW50R, which is a single channel tube head that I use as a pedal platform, with my Friedman BE-OD overdrive and the Bogner Harlow and Ecstasy Blue pedals. Those were the main drives we were running into the clean head. The Friedman pedal into the Morgan was perfect for all the slap tones and articulate stuff, even some of the heavier stuff. For the lead tones, it was my Abasi Pathos pedal going into the Morgan. We also ran a modded Soldano SLO from the 90s, which added this great character in the midrange when blended in.

And how about the actual eight-strings themselves?

Mårten: I'd say ninety-five percent of the guitars were recorded with my M8M Ibanez Custom. It's basically our signature M8M but with a bolt-on neck and it's a little shorter in scale with a piezo mounted on it. It's my favourite instrument. I use it as much as I can, but not live because I'm scared of destroying it. For the clean parts, I used my Roland JC-120 head. I don't know what Fredrik used because he recorded in his studio. He wasn't around for any of this album and hasn't been writing for years, he's been busy doing his own thing. For the four leads he recorded at his place, I'm pretty sure it was his [signature] Ibanez Stoneman.

Tosin: We used Abasi Concepts guitars for nearly everything – the solo on *Thoughts And Prayers* was performed on an ESP. For some reason we weren't happy with the tone on the *Monomyth* solo so the engineer suggested using one of his guitars. We went digging through and there was this Les Paul. I couldn't even tell you what year it was from but it had this nice prominent midrange without being too bright, it sounded really smooth so I tracked with that. I'm pretty pragmatic in the studio – if my favourite gear is not doing what I want then I'm quick to find an objective solution. It's kinda funny though, because you wouldn't think a Les Paul would be anywhere near an Animals As Leaders record… but it happened!

"YOU CAN HAVE A LOT OF FUN USING THE LOW E AS A PEDAL TONE IN YOUR RIFFS" TOSIN ABASI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PHASED & CONFUSED

Why don't more guitars come with different brands' pickups mixed and matched? What's the problem? Dave Burrluck has some answers...

There's little doubt that most guitars made today stick with pickups from the same manufacturer, be that in-house designs or those from a third party such as Seymour Duncan. When was the last time you saw a new guitar for sale with two or three pickups from different makers? The last one I can remember was the Charvel Henrik Danhage signature, which pairs a full-size Seymour Duncan JB at the bridge with a single-coil-sized DiMarzio Area 67 at the neck, and I'd wager the 'different brand pickups on the same guitar' concept is pretty much exclusive to signature instruments.

There are obvious reasons – not least cost and a single purchasing source – that make most manufacturers go the one-brand route. But look at the guitars of your modding mates and you're more likely to find Duncans paired with DiMarzios, or any number of combinations of the vast selection out there. And you don't have to delve that deeply into the history of great guitar players and their instruments to find plenty of mixed brands and styles. So, are we missing a trick?

Just A Phase

That said, pickup manufacturers don't exactly make it easy for us to swap sources. They invariably use different colour codes for their hook-up wires and there is no international protocol for magnet polarity and winding direction.

Charvel's Henrik Danhage signature is rare in that it combines pickups from both DiMarzio and Seymour Duncan

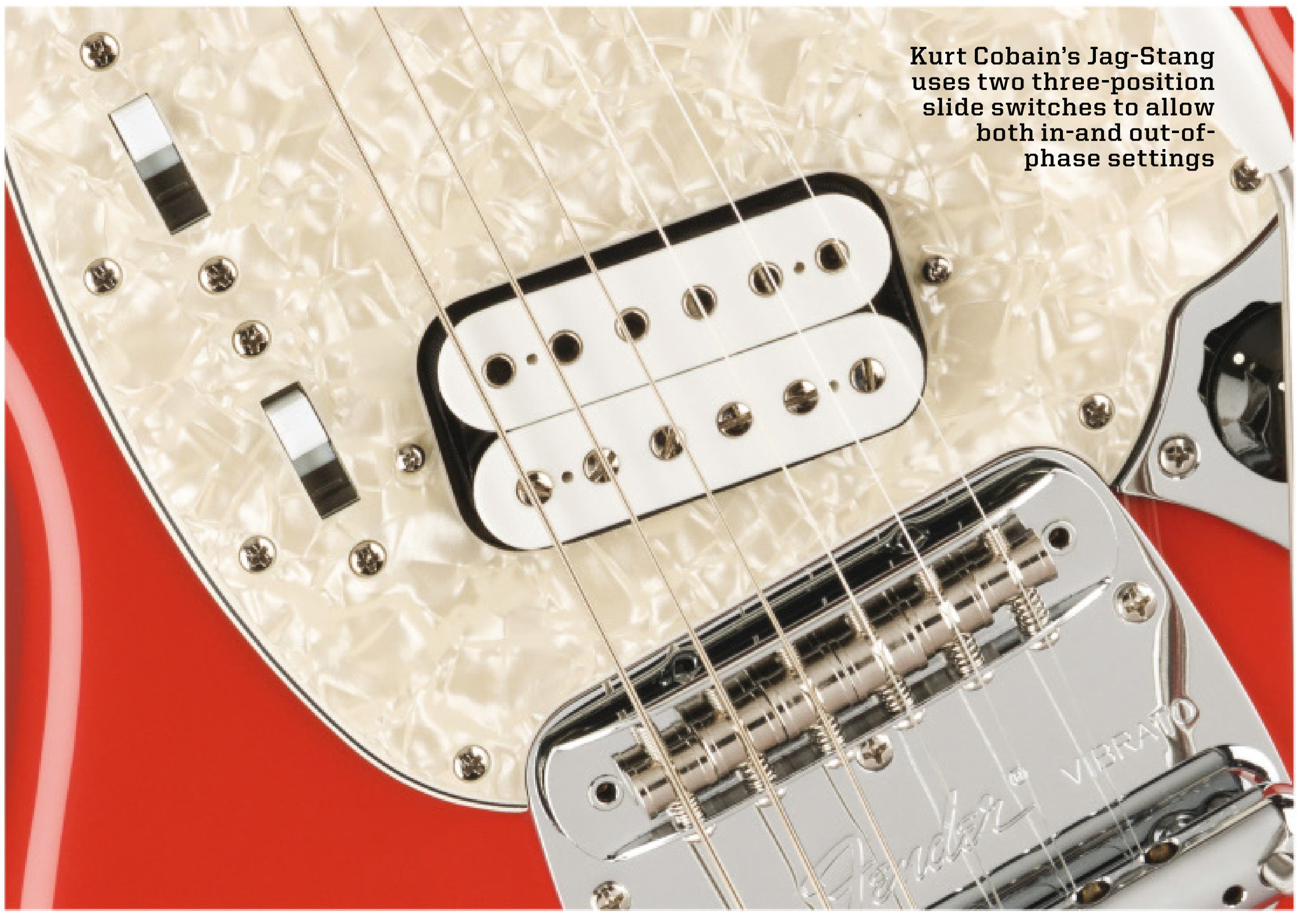
Seymour Duncan
Floyd Rose
TONE

Now, we could get bogged down in the science, but rather like we all did back in the day, trial and error usually wins when combining different pickup brands. However, a major issue is whether or not the new pickup is in phase with the existing one. Depending on the magnet polarity and coil-winding direction, the two pickups will be normal (in phase) when you select both, or abnormal (out of phase) where your sound becomes thin and nasally.

It's a problem that veteran modder Alan Kirby encountered with his ongoing Gretsch Electromatic 5420 makeover. "It just doesn't seem quite right! The combination of P-90 and T-Armond – when used together – is not balanced as well as I would like and seems a bit nasal. Also the pots don't function as they should but seem to alter volume/tone." The two pickups in question are: "a Lindy Fralin P-90 at the neck (-10 percent wind), which works well with the TV Jones T-Armond at the bridge, and is softer but clear", Alan explains. "It sits better than the TV Jones T-90, which I originally tried but is too modern-sounding for the setup, I think." As Alan rightly guessed, he had a phase issue and cured it simply by swapping the hot and ground wires of, I believe, the Fralin in the circuit.

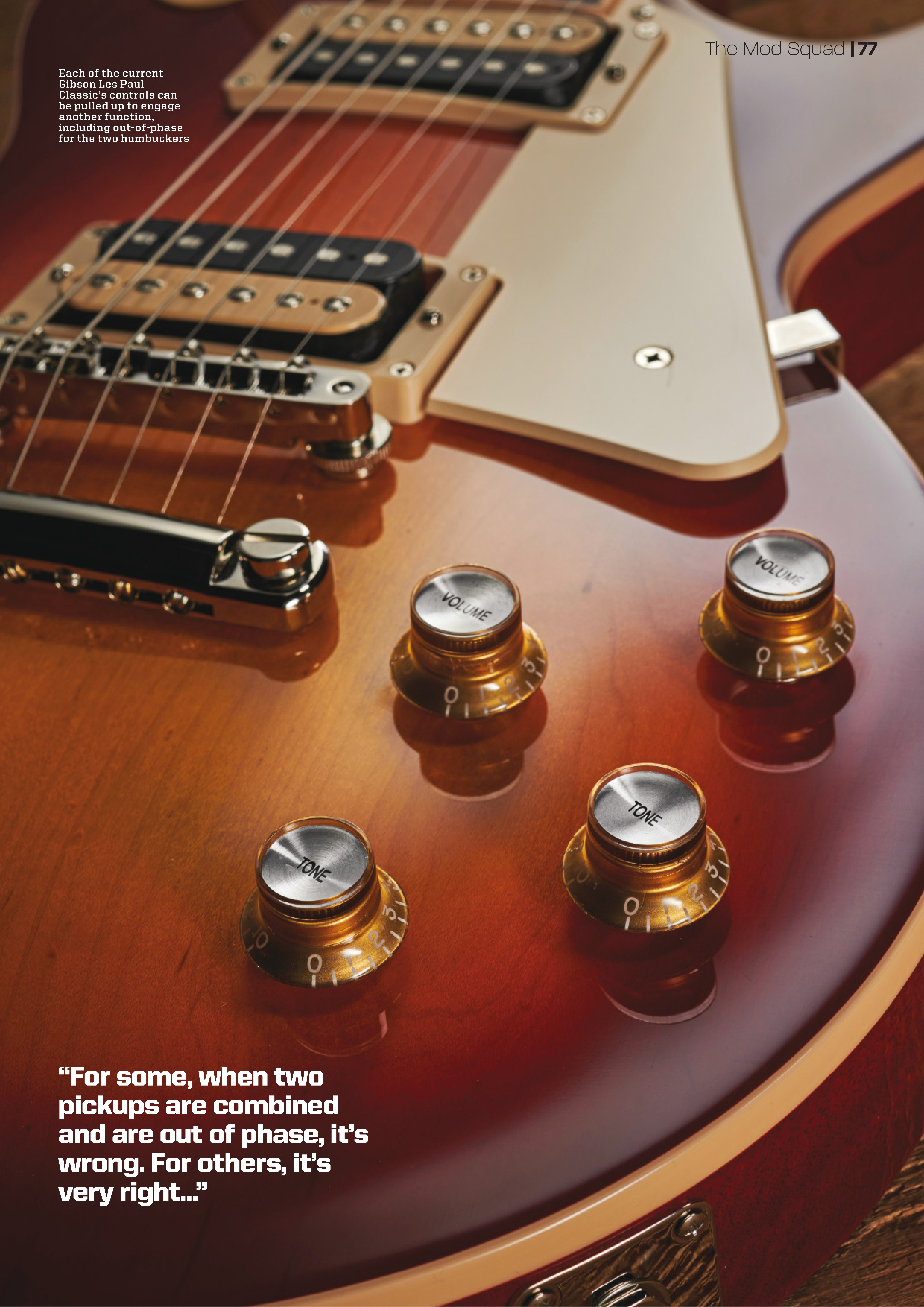
> **"We could get bogged down in science, but trial and error usually wins when combining pickups brands"**

For some, then, when two pickups are combined and are out of phase, it's *wrong*. For others, and let's not forget a certain Mr Peter Green or Mr Jimmy Page, out of phase can be very *right*. Personally, I was always in the former camp until I started working with a recent Gibson Les Paul Classic. This is in



Kurt Cobain's Jag-Stang uses two three-position slide switches to allow both in-and out-of-phase settings

PHOTO COURTESY OF FENDER



Each of the current Gibson Les Paul Classic's controls can be pulled up to engage another function, including out-of-phase for the two humbuckers

"For some, when two pickups are combined and are out of phase, it's wrong. For others, it's very right..."

PHOTO BY DAVE BURRLUCK

Mixing an Oil City Winterizer with a Franz P-90 on this Guild gave the opportunity to wire them out of phase

the Modern strand of Gibson USA's current output and features the not-universally-liked circuit board and four pull-push pots. When pulled up, each volume control gives a sort of single-coil/P-90 emulation, certainly an option to the full humbucker sounds. When you pull up the bridge pickup's tone control, the bridge pickup is solo'd directly to the output, giving a slight treble lift, while the neck tone control acts as a phase switch when pulled up. So, with both pickups on and the centre mixed position selected on the pickup toggle switch, and with both volumes and tones wound fully up, you can switch from that classic, bouncy dual-pickup voice (in phase) to what Alan describes as a 'nasal' thin sound (out of phase).

But because we have a volume for each pickup (unlike on a Telecaster, for example), when you pull back the bridge pickup volume just a little, the phase relationship between the two pickups alters and some – but not all – of the thinness is restored, with only a slight nasal 'edge'. Think Peter Green and even BB King, which in my book makes this 'wrong' phase switch hugely valid.

It's not just tasteful blues that benefits from this 'wrong' sound. Try running it through a dirty cranked amp, preferably with at least one distortion or maxed-out fuzz pedal engaged, and you've just reinvented grunge where that nasally attack sounds really nasty and punky. Plug in Fender's Kurt Cobain Jag-Stang with its hot humbucker/vintage single-coil pickup mismatch, hit the out-of-phase slider switch with both pickups on, and you'll get the idea.

"Run the 'wrong' sound through a dirty amp with fuzz, and you've just reinvented grunge"

I was on a bit of a Daniel Lanois/Neil Young quest a while ago, in adding an Oil City Winterizer Firebird-style pickup to the bridge position of a Guild Aristocrat, leaving its Franz P-90 at the neck. With phase in mind, I'd ordered the Winterizer with a four-conductor hook-up cable, so if I ran into problems I could fix them. I've actually ended up with the pickups out of phase when combined because, like a Les Paul, there's a volume and tone for each pickup. By varying how much of each pickup is dialled in on the separate volumes, that out-of-phase sound becomes really usable, especially when tracking guitars. It adds a little honky attack that you can mix in with a straight Les Paul's bridge pickup, for example. Ideally, when I get a spare moment, wiring in a pull switch to one of the tone controls, like that Les Paul Classic, would mean I have the choice of being in or out of phase.

Rules Of Thumb

If you're combining two differently branded humbuckers, so long as one has four-conductor wiring then you'll be able to sort any phase issue as described. It's the same if you have a humbucker with more rarely two- or three-conductor wiring. If you have a pair of humbuckers with vintage-style single conductors and stranded ground you can't fix the phase without changing the polarity of one humbucker by flipping its magnet.

You can sort phase issues with single coils in a similar manner, although on a Tele's neck pickup, for example, the ground output of the pickup is soldered to the cover. This means you need to separate those and add a separate ground wire from the cover to the back of a pot, leaving you with the two output wires that connect to each end of the coil, either of which can be hot or ground. But this can be problematic, as Fralin Pickups explains: "When we wind a Strat pickup, like our Vintage Hot, the first wraps of the coil directly contact the magnets. Now, it's true that coil wire has an insulation and, theoretically, that insulation will prevent the coil wire from making contact with the magnets, allowing you to reverse the leads. However, the insulation is only 1/10,000-inch thick and occasionally fails. In his wisdom, Leo Fender designed his pickups to have a fail-safe. If the insulation cracks and the coil wire does make contact with the polepieces, they instantly become grounded, instead of hot. Reversing the coil direction of a pickup that has shorted magnets will result in a plethora of noise you do not want."

Of course, if you want two single coils to be hum-cancelling when combined, one pickup needs to be reverse wound with reverse polarity (RW/RP). If that's important to you, buying from a solo source is really recommended, particularly when you can speak to the pickup maker.

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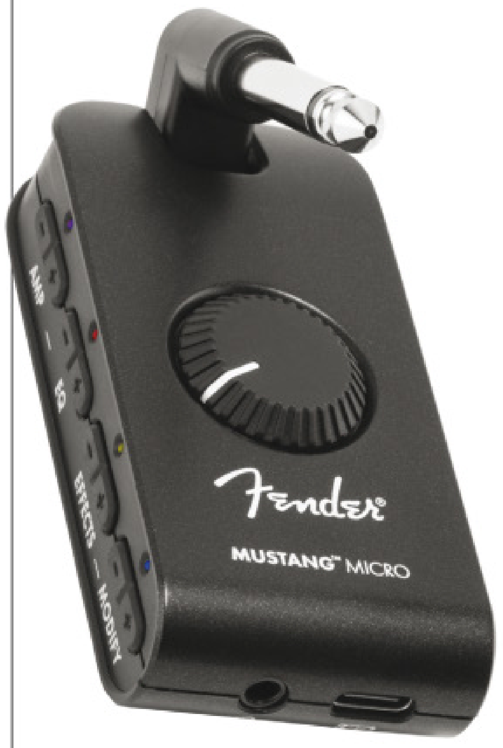

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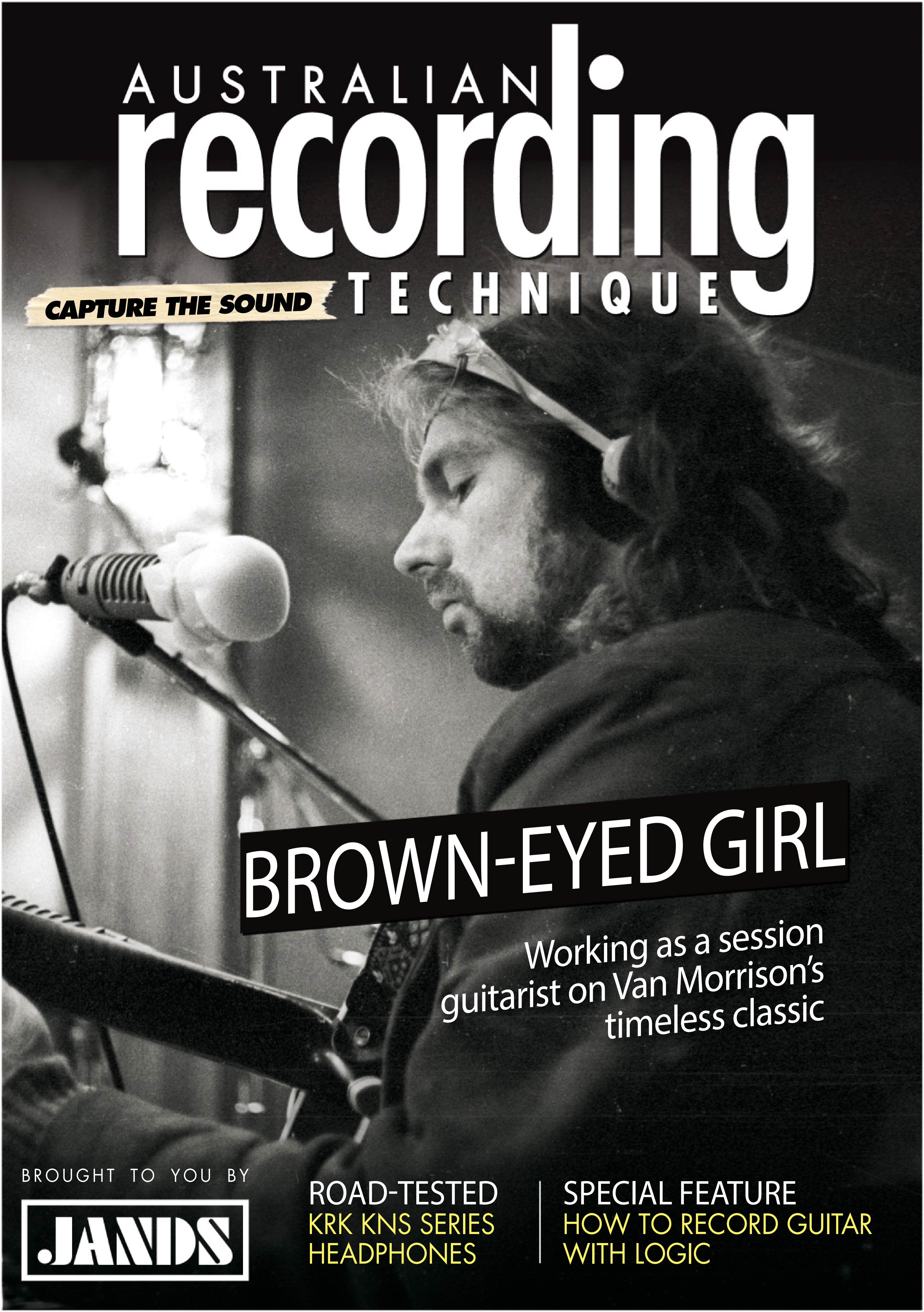

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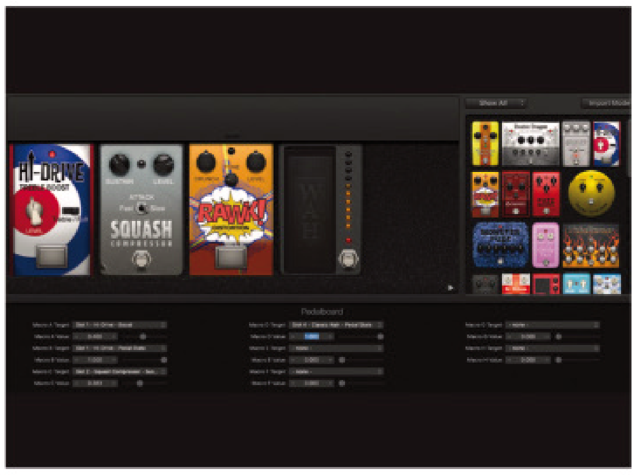
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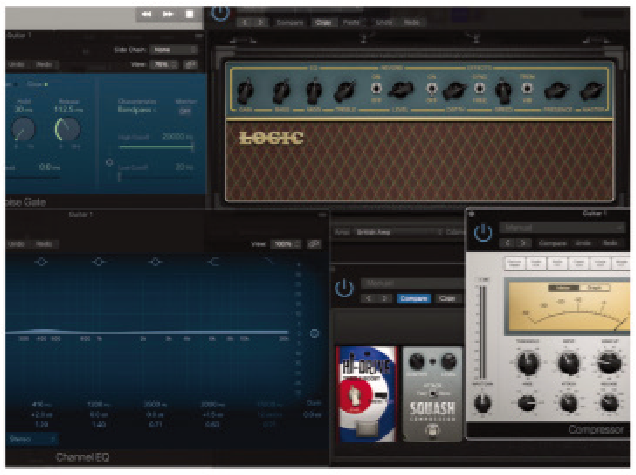
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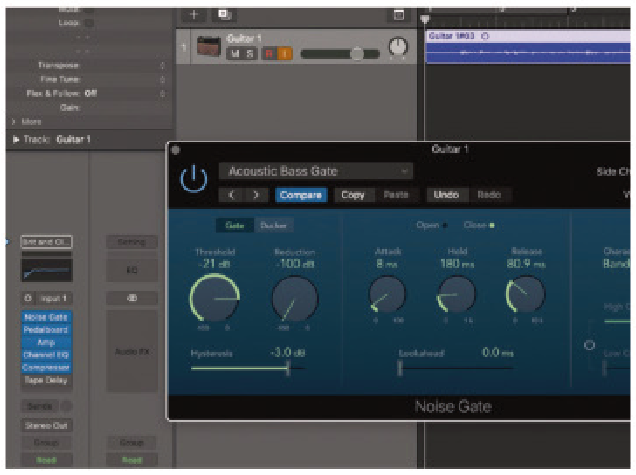
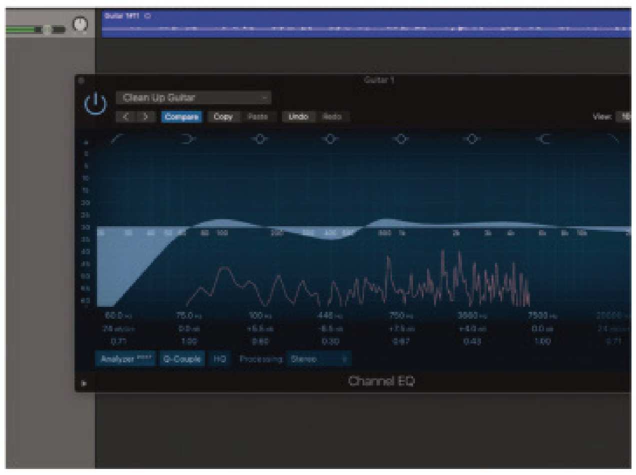
Channel EQ
Compressor

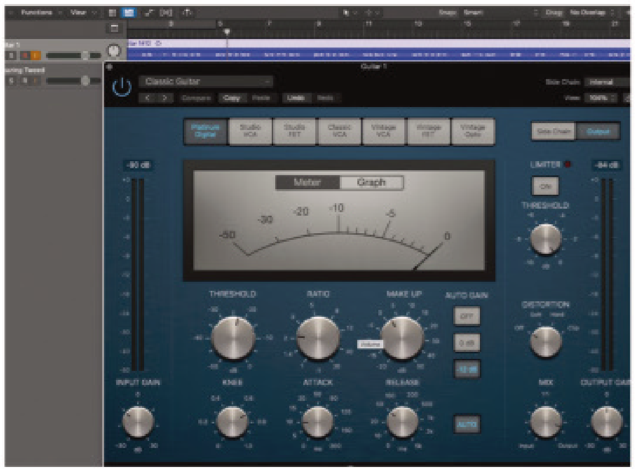
3 You'll notice that Logic instantly loads up with a tone preset from its Amp Designer, and a range of predetermined Compressor, EQ, and Gate settings, as well as a couple of (initially de-activated) pedals via its virtual pedal board. These elements are the core of getting a great sound with Logic.


Guitar 1
Acoustic Bass Gate
Compare
Copy
Paste
Undo
Redo
Threshold
Reduction
Attack
Hold
Release
-21 dB
-100 dB
8 ms
180 ms
80.9 ms
Hysteresis
-3.0 dB
Lookahead
0.0 ms
Noise Gate

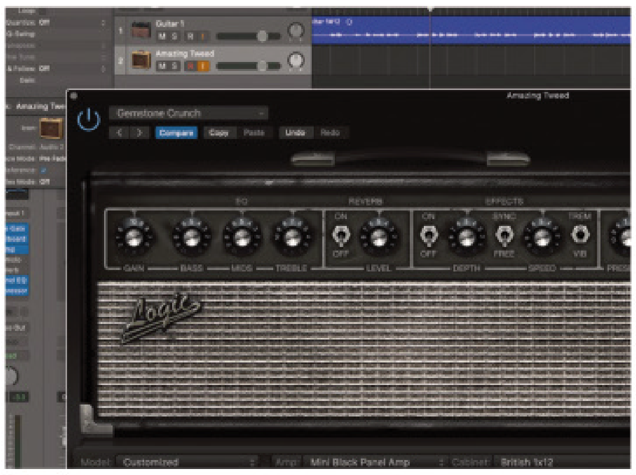
4 The Noise Gate is where you can determine the volume levels that are allowed to be captured and set at a determined threshold. With strummed guitar, it's recommended that you try and remove as many harsh transients as possible; therefore, set your threshold to around -20dB as a starting point, and work down from there.


Clean Up Guitar
Compare
Copy
Paste
Undo
Redo
Channel EQ

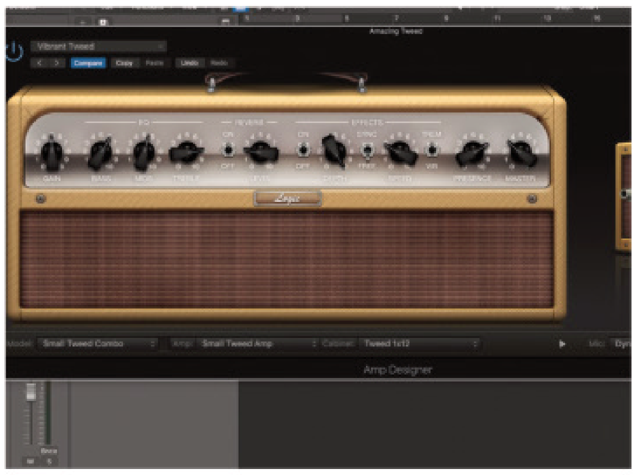
5 Logic's Channel EQ is a vital tool when it comes to the mixing stage, as it can help you find your instrument's frequency space, and chip away at competing frequencies so each track element sits in its own designated frequency area. You'll generally want to start trimming out bass frequencies under 100Hz


Classic Guitar
Meter
Graph
THRESHOLD
RATIO
MAKE UP
AUTO GAIN
INPUT GAIN
KNEE
ATTACK
RELEASE
LIMITER
DISTORTION
MIX
OUTPUT GAIN

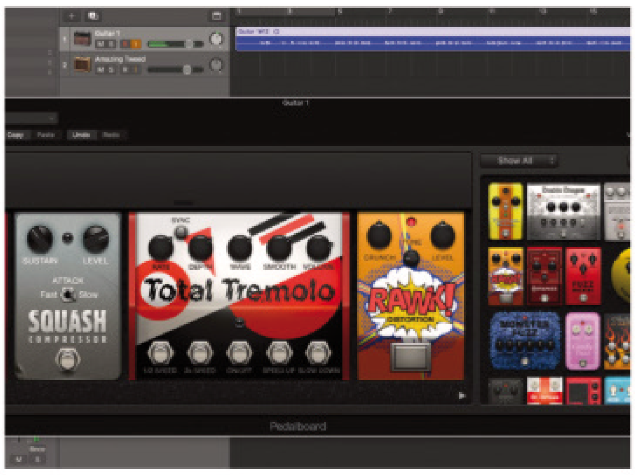
6 The seven analogue modelled compressors within Logic are great for punchy signal boosting, imparting a classic warmth and further taming your frequencies. For chord strums, we set our Attack and Release time to between 10 and 50ms respectively, a 2:1 ratio and reduce input gain to around -5-10dB.


Gemetone Crunch
Amazing Tweed
Logic
Model
Customized
Amp
Mini Black Panel Amp
Cabinet
British 1x12

7 Logic's Amp Designer is where much of the real magic happens. It allows a range of virtual amps and cabs to be selected, with a virtual output picked up by a virtual mic. All amps feature reproductions of control knobs and the main tonal controls are often joined by authentic-sounding modelled effects, such as the Small Tweed Amp's retro-flavoured tremolo and vibrato, which can make your sound even more sweet.


Vibrant Tweed
Amazing Tweed
Logic
Small Tweed Combo
Small Tweed Amp
Tweed 1x12
Amp Designer

8 The virtual pedalboard is an absolute treat, and is where you can combine various colourful pedal combinations to concoct a more vibrant signal chain. Each pedal replicates the simple on/off design of real-world hardware, and simple volume and effect-specific parameters.


SQUASH
Total Tremolo
RAWK!
Pedalboard

9 Pedalboard has two discrete effect busses which you can easily switch between, while certain pedal parameters (such as performing Wah Wah sweeps) can be automated via eight macro controls. Combined with everything else it offers, Logic isn't just another DAW, it stands as tall as a real contender in the world of virtual guitar recording.

SOMETHING SPECIAL IN THE AIR: THE STORY OF RECORDING VAN MORRISON'S BROWN EYED GIRL

SESSION GUITARISTS HUGH MCCRACKEN AND AL GORGONI RECALL THEIR MEMORIES AND VITAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ROCK CLASSIC. WORDS BY **NEVILLE MARTEN**

Every good function band knows one thing: play ABBA's Dancing Queen, Come On Eileen by Dexys Midnight Runners or Van Morrison's 1967 smash hit Brown Eyed Girl and the dancefloor will immediately become a sea of writhing bodies. Even Van, usually dismissive of the track, concedes: "If you can shake your ass it must be all right."

Brown Eyed Girl comes from a selection of tracks recorded in New York after the break up of his band, Them. Producer Bert Berns signed Morrison to his new label, Bang, and released the tracks as the album, Blowin' Your Mind!. But while Brown Eyed Girl captured Morrison in effervescent mood and launched his solo career, it would leave a sour taste in his mouth due to poor contracts and unpaid royalties.

All but bankrupt when he recorded the track in New York's A&R Studios with a team of NYC's session elite, little could the singer have known that his fortunes were about to change forever.

Morrison, it seemed, was worried that his music was about to be hijacked – again. Cissy Houston, mother of Whitney and one of the backing vocalists on the day, explained: "Van felt burned by the English record company that originally recorded Them. They had packed the studio with session players and changed the sound of the band for commercial purposes. When Van looked around our studio and

observed all the players that had been hired he probably thought he was revisiting the London studio where all the trouble began."

He needn't have feared. Berns had hired two guitarists, Hugh McCracken on rhythm and Al Gorgoni playing lead. Both were seasoned pros, having worked with the likes of Neil Diamond, Simon & Garfunkel, Bob Dylan and The Monkees and dozens of other '60s chart-busters. Gorgoni recalls the studio clearly. "A&R was between two great music business places on West 48th Street, Manny's and Jim & Andy's," he told Total Guitar magazine back in 2011.

"All the rock bands that came through New York made a pilgrimage to Manny's music store to have their pictures on the wall. Jim & Andy's was a restaurant and bar that was the local musicians' hangout. In those days, lots of players frequented the place, and if someone didn't show up for a date, a frantic call would be made and, sure enough, there would be a player there happy to take it."

"I definitely felt something special in the air that day," added McCracken, who passed away in 2013. "Arranger Garry Sherman handed out chord sheets and Van sang. He was very introverted until he started singing – and he sang on every take."

Studio musicians are often required to 'read the dots' to the most demanding of pieces, but this was more of a 'feel' session. "I could read well enough," says Gorgoni, "but on this occasion our task was more improvisational. More about listening to what was happening, about finding something that was musically appropriate to the situation."

When probed as to whether he came up with that instantly recognisable intro in 3rds, and the fills in 6ths that decorate the rest of the track, Al affirmed the fact with characteristic modesty. Cissy Houston was more direct: "Al Gorgoni devised a figure that became as memorable as the song's hook," she said.

Guitar wise, it was jazzers all the way. "Although I got the call for electric and Hugh for acoustic, it was usually the other way around," Gorgoni said. "So I used a Gibson L-5 on the neck pickup, through a tweed Fender Deluxe.

In those days the producers left details like tone and pickup selection to the players, although sometimes the engineers would request modifying the sound to get the guitar to work in particular circumstances. It was a transitional time and we would still get calls for combo guitar, usually an archtop with a DeArmond pickup attached to it, so you could plug it in or play it acoustically."

Hugh played 'combo guitar' on the track. "I borrowed Al's Epiphone Howard Roberts," he said, "an archtop, oval-hole electric, unplugged but mic'd. Actually, I liked it so much I bought it from him after the session."

Legend has it that the final version of Brown Eyed Girl was the 22nd take, which Cissy confirmed: "Before the session began he was a shy, withdrawn 21-year-old. But once they rolled the tape he was a live wire, so full of ideas and improvisation that every take sounded like a different song. He was scatting toward the fade like a madman, his eyes closed in the vocal booth, wringing wet after each of the 22 takes."

Guitarists like Al Gorgoni and Hugh McCracken can look back with pride on careers that have enhanced the music of so many legendary artists. "I hear it in stores or restaurants and it still sounds good to me," Al said. "It was memorable, and the music created a special vibe. Hugh is a marvellous player and still a dear friend. I'm happy and so lucky to have been a part of the music of that time."

Brown Eyed Girl had the same effect on Hugh. "I'm proud to have been a part of that. I think everyone there that day felt it was a hit."

KRK
KNS-6402

PRICE: $179 / $269

KRK KNS Series headphones

WE PLUG UP THE LATEST INCARNATION OF THESE LONG ESTABLISHED HEADPHONES FROM SPEAKER GIANTS KRK. REVIEW BY **JON MUSGRAVE**

KRK is best known for its studio monitors, but for about a decade the company has also produced some pretty decent closed-back headphones. Those headphones (KNS 6400 and KNS 8400) offer a solid mix of price and performance and the KNS 8400 in particular is a really good set of cans.

Both models have had a refresh and have been replaced by the suitably named KNS 6402 and KNS 8402. Once again, the two models hit different price points and have their own sonic signature.

Both designs are built around 40mm neodymium-based drivers with body components primarily made from impact-resistant materials. They use a robust, sliding metal headband design, and the ear cups rotate (up to 90 degrees) and pivot. At 202g and 232g, respectively, they're also reasonably light, so it's no surprise that we found them pretty comfortable over long periods.

What's more, when the time comes, both headbands and ear pads are easily replaceable. Each pair includes a 2.5m detachable locking cable and KRK also sells various other lengths and types of cable, should you require something different.

There's also a handy inline volume slider cable, which is included as standard with the KNS 8402. Both bundles are rounded off with a carry pouch and microfibre cleaning cloth.

Despite the similarities there are some fundamental differences between the two designs. First up, the KNS 8402 uses memory foam rather than cellular foam for both headband and ear pads. This not only makes it more comfortable, but also no doubt contributes to its better ambient noise isolation. The KNS 8402 also has better sensitivity and better frequency response at both extremes.

Comparing them to the original versions, it's also clear the KNS 8402 has had a visual makeover, with subdued branding and a new metal plate design on the outside of the ear cups. The KNS 6402, meanwhile, looks more like the previous version.

The two headphones sound in many ways quite different. The KNS 6402 has a very clear mid-range, reasonably subdued higher frequencies and not too much bass. On paper this sounds unattractive, and it's certainly not a profile you'd want for leisure use. However, in a tracking situation where you want to be able to get your pitch and timing right, I'd say this is an ideal frequency response. And coupled with the decent ambient noise isolation, you can see where they're coming from.

In contrast, the KNS 8402 has a more extended and beautifully smooth high frequency response, very usable low frequency extension, a slightly subdued lower mid range and a present but not hyped upper mid range. In essence, they sound pretty good, and are certainly better tuned for mixing, mastering or general listening. The general consensus is that the original KNS 8400 sounded great but lacked a bit of bass. The same doesn't apply to the KNS 8402 and from a mixing perspective if anything there's marginally too much bass, although this is by no means a dealbreaker.

At the end of the day, this refresh has clearly impacted the KNS 8402 the most and this now has a slightly different sonic signature and an overall more professional look. That said, both models are still robust, repairable and very competitively priced headphones that are extremely worthy of your attention.

▶ VERDICT

KRK's headphones continue to offer great sonics and excellent value. Each model is best suited to different tasks, but the added comfort and overall fidelity of the KNS 8402 make it our preferred choice.

▶ PROS

- Closed back design ideal for recording.
- Memory foam padding of 8402 very comfortable.
- Detachable cable with various additional cable types available.

▶ CONS

- Each model is best for different tasks.

▶ CONTACT

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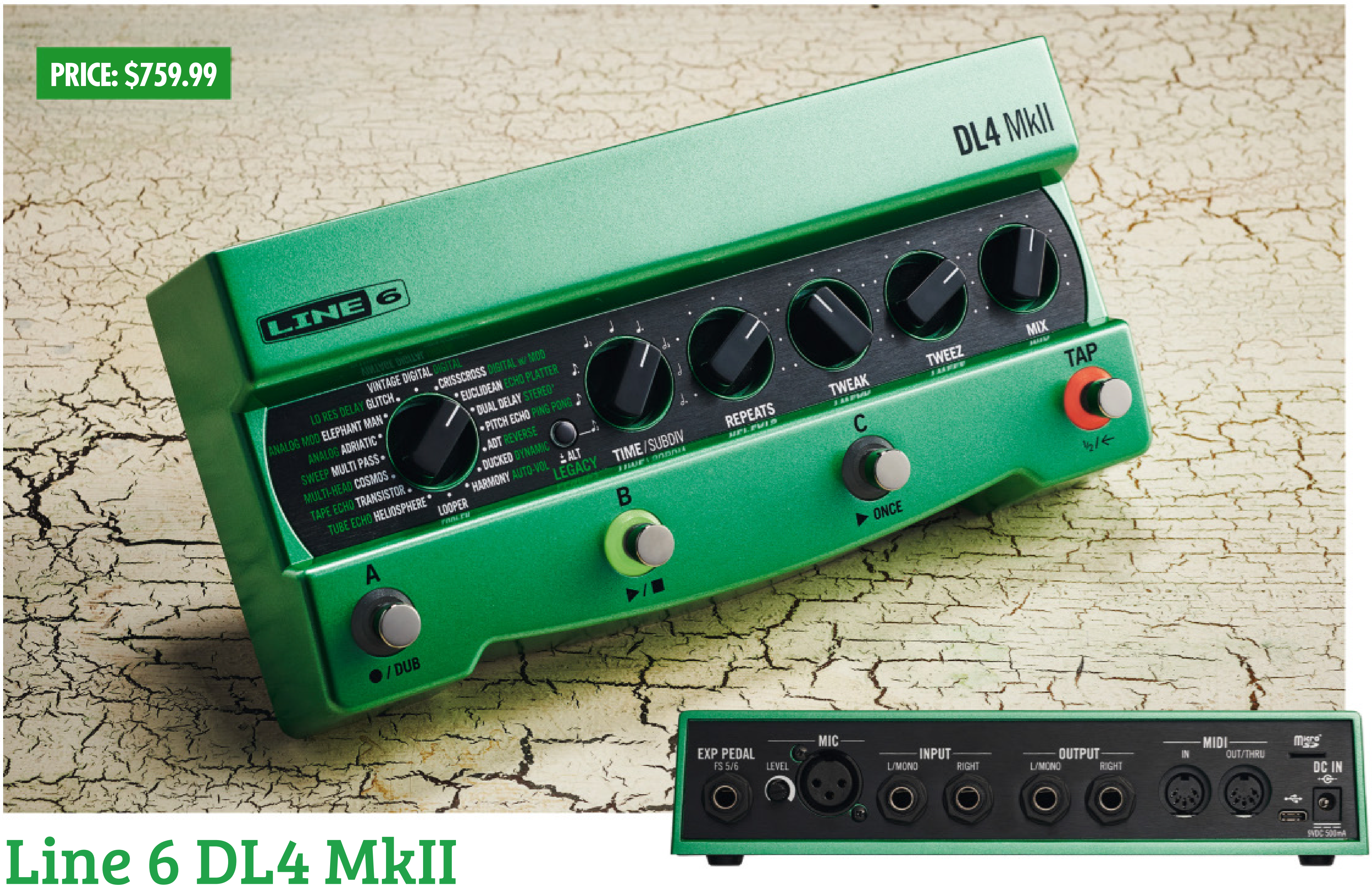

Line 6 DL4 MkII

LINE 6 PRESENTS A TIMELY REVAMP OF A DELAY LEGEND. REVIEW BY **TREVOR CURWEN**

Line 6's original DL4, released in 1999, has been an incredible success story. Many guitarists still have one on their pedalboard despite its age and modern rivals. It's also never been unavailable, remaining on sale while its siblings in the Line 6 Stompbox Modeler series have all been discontinued. Now, though, there's a new Mk II version that stays true to the original while at the same time bringing it right up to date.

So, what's new? Well, this is a slightly smaller but sleeker version that keeps the original's same knob and footswitch array. It also retains all of its delay models while adding an extra 15 new ones direct from the HX family of effects. All 30 of the delay models are called up by the same rotary switch, but a small button selects between new and old – pressing the Legacy button effectively switches between DL4 Mk II and original DL4. Reverb can be incorporated into any of the delays, plus there's an improved looper with both 4-Switch and 1-Switch operation and up to 240 seconds of recording time (half-speed, mono) that can be expanded to several hours with a Micro SD card.

Also new is an XLR microphone input and MIDI capability for real-time parameter control and preset selection, plus an external input that can host an expression pedal or an extra pair of footswitches. The power supply has changed, too; there are no batteries any more, but this can now run from any nine-volt pedalboard distributor that can deliver 500mA of current.

Default DL4 Mk II operation is to have three different delays instantly available with a tap tempo footswitch to set the timing. You set up the delay sound you want and assign it as a preset to a chosen footswitch. The pedal, however, supports 128 presets in total that can be accessed via MIDI. What's more, you can globally change the Tap footswitch to operate like a bank selector to give you an extra three accessible presets direct from the pedal.

There are just five knobs to adjust your delay. Time, Repeats and Mix do the same as any delay pedal, while Tweak and Tweez adjust a specific parameter for each of the 30 delay types, such as Rate and Depth for those delays featuring modulation. Want to add reverb to your delay? You get access to all the options and adjustable parameters by holding down the Alt/Legacy button. There are 15 reverb types, conventional and esoteric, available from the main selector switch, and the reverb can be set to come before or after the delay or in parallel with it.

The delay types are a mix of models based on vintage gear (Echoplex, Space Echo, Echorec, Deluxe Memory Man) and Line 6 originals covering all the 'fancy' stuff such as reverse, ping-pong, ducking and pitched delays. The original 15 did their job (and still do) but now have a new lease of life via adding reverb for additional ambience.

Of the 15 newer delays, some are based on the same vintage units, but these are justified as they offer a different take; Adriatic, for example, is a tweaked Boss DM-2 that adds modulation and longer delay time up to 1.8 seconds, while Cosmos is based on Roland's classic Space Echo RE-201, complementing the legacy RE-101 model. Also new and very welcome is ADT, which emulates the automatic double tracking action of two tape machines working together.

All the conventional stuff is more than adequately covered, then, but there's plenty for the experimentalists, including glitchy, filtered, pitched and harmonised delays – even patterned repeats based on Euclidean rhythm algorithms. Everything works perfectly well in a standard mono signal chain, but those running a stereo rig can take full advantage of the spatial aspects.

Line 6 may have subscribed to the 'if it ain't broke...' ethos for 23 years, but in the light of the various hi-tech rivals now out there, this is a timely and well thought out update – up to date with all the pertinent new features, but still familiar.

▶ VERDICT

Anyone who's used a DL4 will transition to this new version without dropping a beat, while those who haven't will discover an extremely functional source of a vast range of delay and ambient sounds coupled with a cool looper.

▶ PROS

- Modern spec.
- More pedalboard friendly.
- Instant access to multiple delay presets.

▶ CONS

- Instant footswitching between the Tap and 'bank select' actions would be good.

▶ CONTACT

YAMAHA MUSIC AUSTRALIA
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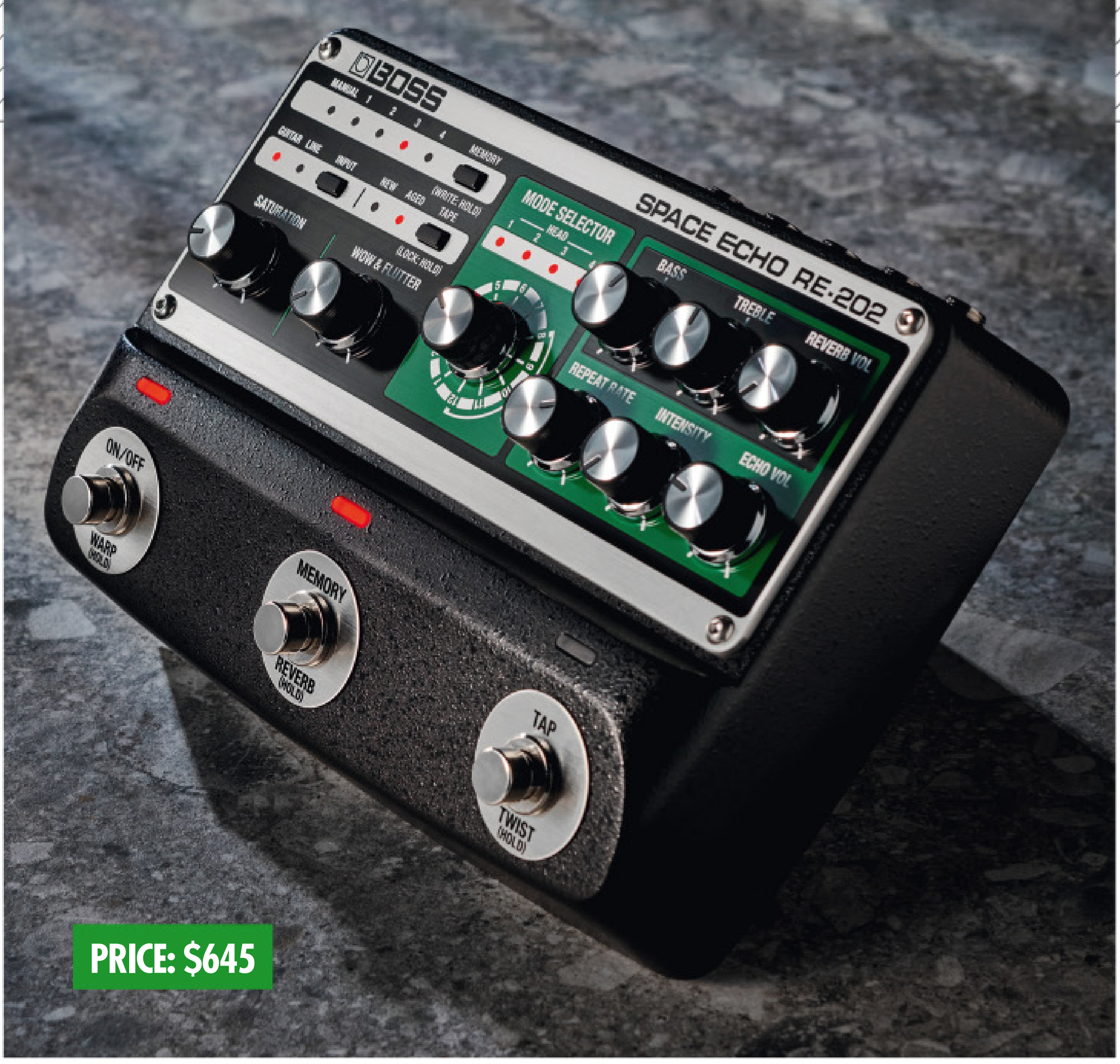

PRICE: $645

Boss Space Echo RE-202

BOSS PRESENTS A PEDAL TO TRULY RECREATE THE SOUND OF ROLAND'S ICONIC TAPE ECHO UNIT. REVIEW BY **TREVOR CURWEN**

The RE-201 Space Echo has become the stuff of legend. The company knew that such an important machine deserved to be celebrated in a pedal and came up with the Boss RE-20 around 15 years ago. However, technology moves on and the time was ripe to revisit the Space Echo, with new advancements allowing a deeper delve into its complex non-linear behaviour.

Boss says that everything that influences the sound was carefully examined and recreated with new algorithms, the result being not one but two new pedals: the triple-footswitch RE-202 we have on test here, and the RE-2, which comes in standard Boss compact pedal form – still sonically potent but missing some of its sibling's features.

The RE-202 is about the size of two and a half Boss compact pedals set side by side and features a curvy chassis shape that gives a nod to the earliest Boss pedals, such as the CE-1, DM-1 and DB-5. Offering stereo as well as mono connection, the right side of the RE-202's control surface mirrors the exact knob layout of an RE-201 with a 12-position rotary mode selector to choose the head combinations.

This new version differs from the original, however, by having four virtual heads, rather than three. Where the modes on the RE-201 offered four different head options without reverb, seven with reverb and one reverb-only mode, this one provides seven modes offering all the various options for the first three heads singly and in combination, plus a further five modes that incorporate the fourth head. Reverb can be independently added to all 12 simply by turning up the Reverb Volume knob.

By contrast, the smaller RE-2 only has three virtual heads and has 11 modes that match the RE-201's echo modes (with reverb on only modes 5 to 11). In its default Normal mode the RE-202 has the same Repeat Rate (delay time) range as an RE-201 and a maximum value for the tap tempo of one second, but there is a Long mode (with a two second tap tempo), and the extended delay time increases options beyond a purely vintage experience.

Part of the sonic profile of a tape echo is obviously due to the idiosyncrasies of the tape medium and its transport mechanism. The RE-202 gives you access to a range of parameters that mimic these, meaning that certain sonic characteristics that you'd have little or no control over in an original machine can be zeroed in on here to get the exact sound you want with consistency. For example, you can set the RE-202 to sound like a machine where the tape is pristine or one where the tape is well used and exhibits duller tone. The waywardness of the sound is caused by small fluctuations in tape speed due to the state of the transport mechanism, and this can be adjusted with the Wow & Flutter knob, which adds a realistic characteristic swimminess, but it can get further into pitch modulation like a machine that's out of kilter, or just for effect.

The preamp in an original machine contributes to sonic character, particularly when driven hard, adding compression and distortion – and this is reproduced here by the Saturation knob, which is great for thickening and dirtying the repeats. You have the option of preamp emulation either being switched in with the echo effect or always on, contributing to your overall tone even when the echo is bypassed. In this case, the Saturation knob will turn up the juice on both the repeats and the dry sound. Besides these, the Bass and Treble knobs provide a generous and practical range of adjustment, aiding sculpting the repeats to blend perfectly with your playing.

The reverb here is an accurate simulation of the short spring found in an RE-201, but if you'd prefer something different from its somewhat boxy nature, then there are Hall, Room, Plate and Ambience options. With plenty of adjustable parameters, it's extremely useful to have four presets onboard to save favourite sounds you've discovered, but the RE-202 actually supports 127 memories accessible via MIDI program change.

Given the 40-plus years of use our original RE-201 has clocked up and the inherent differences between electro-mechanical randomness and digital consistency, we weren't expecting the RE-202 to sound identical to it in an A/B test. But it actually nailed the sound – we were able reproduce everything the RE-201 was capable of, apart from the occasional random glitches, which presumably no-one would want, where the tape momentarily slowed down before catching up to speed (admittedly our RE-201 hasn't been serviced in a while!). The single-head echoes all do their job wonderfully, covering plenty of playing applications, such as slapback, but it's the combinations that make a multi-head machine special with the complexity of its rhythmic patterns. Those here sound great as the repeats bounce around and drift off naturally into the distance – and the fourth head is a real bonus, delivering patterns you wouldn't get using an RE-201. Mode 12, for example, with all four heads engaged (incidentally with altered head spacing), offers a certain dense ambience.

While the main functions of the three footswitches are for bypass, selecting presets and tap tempo, they each have a secondary performance function when pressed and held. The middle footswitch can be used to bring the reverb in and out within your active effect, while the other two offer similar effects to those you'd get by twisting knobs in real-time. The Twist effect is the equivalent of turning up the repeat rate, while the Warp effect is like turning the Intensity (feedback) up. Both ramp back down when you release the footswitch. They are fun, but for real performance versatility you can connect an expression pedal assigned to one or multiple parameters – for example, giving nuanced control over ramping up the feedback into self-oscillation. Boss has got this just right: the RE-202 accurately reproduces Space Echo sound while also managing to go way beyond the capabilities of an original Roland RE-201.

VERDICT

If you've ever wished to have a Space Echo in your rig but thought it impractical, now you can do it with total confidence.

PROS

- Accurate recreation of RE201 sound.
- fourth head.
- Tap tempo, memories.

CONS

- Certain global functions are a little convoluted to set up.

CONTACT

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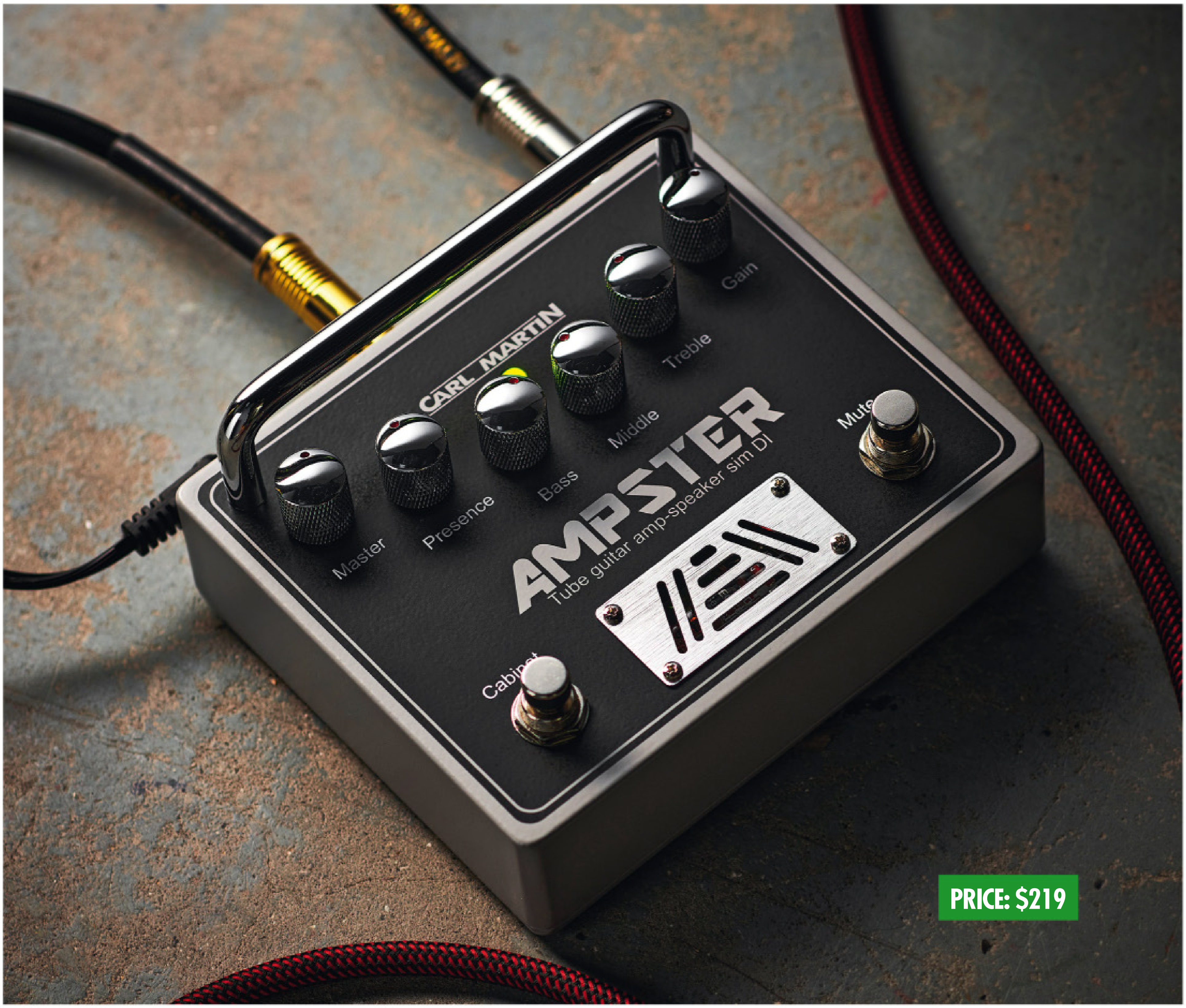

PRICE: $219

Carl Martin Ampster Amp Speaker Sim DI

THIS VALVE-DRIVEN DI BOX FROM CARL MARTIN COULD BE THE MISSING LINK FOR PEDALBOARD USERS.

REVIEW BY **NICK GUPPY**

Based in Denmark, analogue specialist East Sound Research has been turning out clever products for guitar and bass under the Carl Martin brand for nearly 30 years and has an enviable artist roster that includes Joe Bonamassa, Pete Thorn and Kid Andersen. Added to an already diverse range that includes pedals, amps and switching solutions, the Ampster is a valve-based DI box that's poised to be popular for anyone who uses pedals.The Ampster is intended to sit at the end of a pedal chain and adds direct-out flexibility, with a quality balanced output on XLR for connection to audio interfaces, and studio or live consoles. There's a familiar set of amp-like controls including Gain and Master volume, together with Bass, Middle, Treble and Presence. Two footswitches sit either side of a small silver-vent grille, behind which lurks a single TAD ECC83 twin triode valve. One of these buttons functions as a mute, while the other switches between a choice of 4x12 closedback or 2x12 open-back cabinet emulations. A single LED glows red or green depending which emulation is active and flashes when the Ampster is in mute mode.

On the rear panel there's a single 6mm jack input and a jack marked 'Link' for direct connection to an amp. The balanced DI output features a useful ground lift switch and there's also a three-position voicing switch that progressively trims low-end frequencies to taste. The Ampster also boasts a series effects loop and a useful remote switch if you want to house it in a rack. Power comes from an external adaptor that isn't included: the Ampster needs a good one amp of current so if you're using an existing power supply, make sure it can handle this, or alternatively use Carl Martin's own Power Jack PSU.

We tried the Ampster out with drive and delay pedals into a small mixing console and were impressed by the convincing cab emulations and warm, amp-like tones. The simple controls are quick to dial in and fun to use, and it's also impressively free of noise, making it a great choice for studios.

▶ VERDICT

With more players using pedalboards to get their sound, the Ampster could turn out to be the vital missing link, adding a quality console connection so you can run your guitar into an amp, a desk or both and mix the signal for the best overall result.

▶ PROS

- Adds valve warmth and balaced DI to any pedalboard.
- All the functions needed to get a great sound.

▶ CONS

- Niche, but indispensable for 'board users.
- Needs a solid 1A of DC power.

▶ CONTACT

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Yamaha RSS02T

YAMAHA'S REVSTAR RANGE GETS A SERIOUS MAKEOVER AND MUCH MORE. REVIEW BY **DAVE BURRLUCK**

Back in 2015, Yamaha took the wraps off its Revstar range, their first new electric guitar design in over a decade. It involved substantial R&D, not to mention worldwide evaluation sessions with industry insiders and artists, and the final designs mixed up Yamaha's long guitar history with a dash of motorcycle 'café racer' heritage and a flavouring of Japanese craft styles.

Seven years on, here is the Revstar Mk II. Outwardly similar in style these are far from a refresh: the new guitars amount to a substantial redesign. There are fewer models, too (nine in total, including two left-handed models), and the range is split into three levels: the start up Element, the meat-and-potatoes Standard, as with our reviewed RSS02T, both made in Indonesia, and the top-level Japanese-made Professional.

Pulling our RSS02T from its quality gigbag, it appears very similar to the previous style but the changes start with that double-cut body shape which here is slightly enlarged in size. It's also a chambered design with a thin maple cap all hidden under the faultless gloss finish. Chambering can be used to reduce weight but here it's about improving the resonance and response informed by Yamaha's Acoustic Design process. Our sample has a very mainstream 'solidbody' weight of 3.55kg.

Like the original Revstar, the Mk II models centre on a Gibson-esque scale length of 24.75", the mahogany neck is glued to the body but again hidden from view are two carbon graphite reinforcing rods either side of the truss rod to, primarily, increase stability. The Revstar's original neck shape from the 500-series models upwards is changed here to a less chunky profile with a slightly narrower nut along with a satin finish to the neck back.

So while the basic chassis has actually evolved quite dramatically, the updates don't stop there. The frets remain jumbo in size but are now stainless steel on this and the Professional models. The custom tailpiece is retained from the original version, although now it's nickel-plated, and it remains very much part of the 'café racer' style. It is slightly adjustable in height to introduce a trapeze tailpiece-like response.

Also retained here are the dual soapbar single coils, designed by Yamaha Guitar Development and made by pickup giants G&B, but there are plenty of changes to the actual electronics. Firstly, there's now a five-way lever pickup selector which gives us bridge, both and neck in positions 1, 3 and 5. Then in positions 2 and 4 two small capacitors come into play "to shift the phase of the pickup slightly (not like the typical out-of-phase sound) and create a taste of a 'half-tone' sound when they're mixed," explains Yamaha's Takashi Yamashiro.

The Mk II range also introduces another new feature called the Focus Switch. Described as a 'passive boost', if you take off the rear control cavity cover you'll see a small transformer inside your guitar! "We found that by passing the signal through a transformer, the level could be increased a little bit without a battery," continues Takashi, "and also shift the frequency range. It could give an effect as if the pickup is over-wound."

Plugging in and playing the result of all this original design and second-generation tweakery we get the impression that Revstar has come of age. The changes to the neck alone create a really good player with effortlessly smooth string bends. Going through the pickup selections we have a pretty humbucking sounding array at the bridge and neck (power with a little cut), which, as you pull down the volume control, turns to cleaner jangle while those subtly phase-shifted mix positions certainly emulate the character of a Strat's mixed pickup positions. It's like Revstar has a new lease of life. The Focus Switch certainly boosts the lower and mid frequencies, rounding out the high end for a thick, Santana-esque texture. Plenty of us might be thinking we could do that with a simple pedal boost, but using the Focus Switch, creates a character shift for some pretty huge sounding gained voices or, in contrast, some thick, rounded cleans.

▶ VERDICT

It's just the overall feel and these really good sounding soapbars that sway the deal for us: a guitar that punches significantly above its price point.

▶ PROS

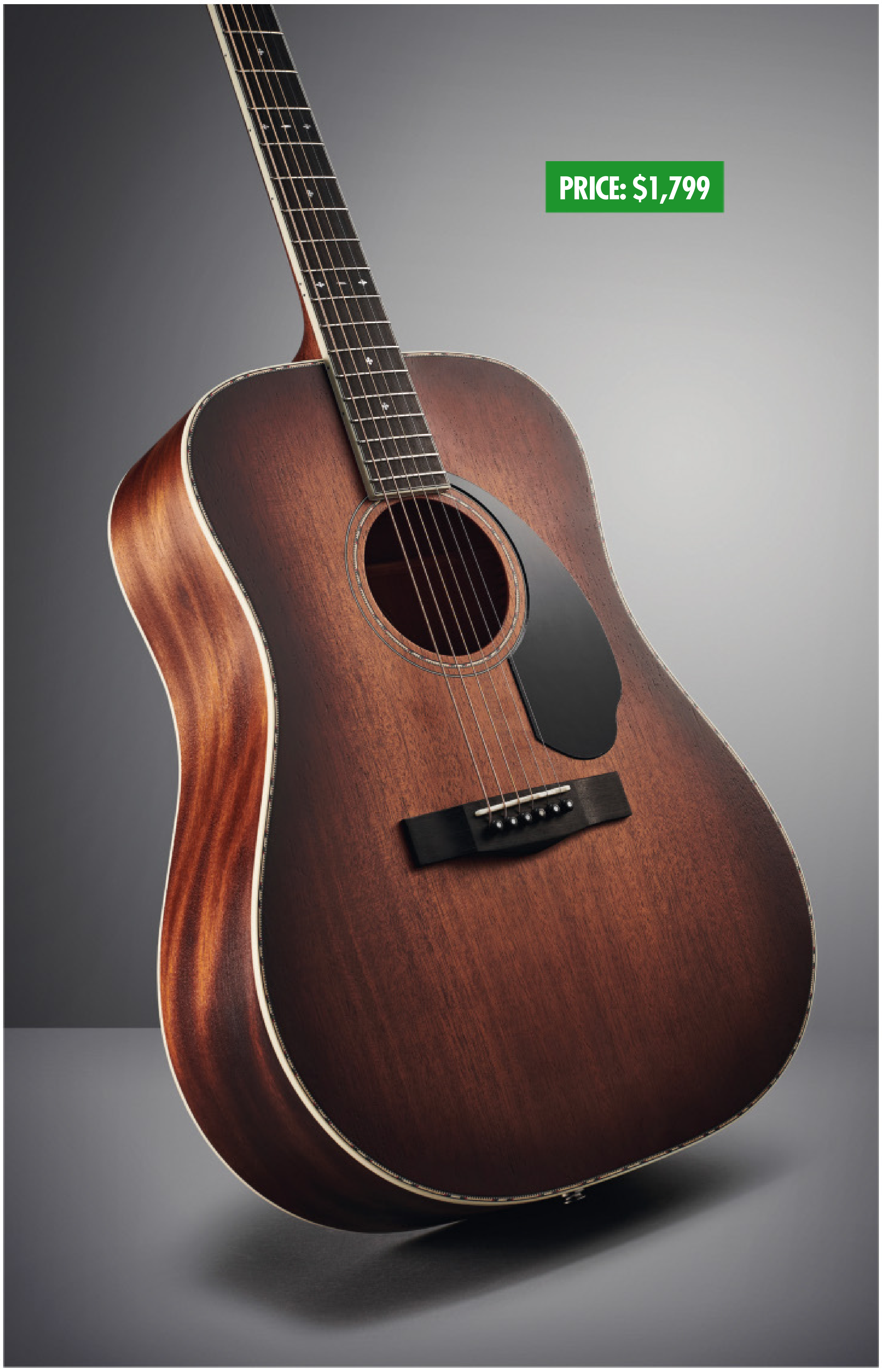
- Great features and value for money. Impeccable build.

▶ CONS

- None

▶ CONTACT

YAMAHA MUSIC AUSTRALIA
Ph: (03) 9693 5111
Web: au.yamaha.com



PRICE: $1,799

Fender Paramount PD-220E

THE LATEST IN FENDER'S MOST UNDERRATED LINE STEPS THINGS UP CONSIDERABLY. REVIEW BY **MIKE BROOKS**

With all the excitement around Fender's Acoustasonic models you'd be forgiven for overlooking the company's extensive array of more traditional flat-top steel string models alongside those bold hybrids. The Paramount series is especially one to watch, and we feel it's perhaps the company's most underrated line. Back in 2017 we were impressed by the first Paramount mahogany models we tried and felt they stood up to anything in their electro-acoustic $1,500 bracket. They even included a hard case.

Nearly five years later and a hard case is still included here on this enhanced model, but the acoustic market as a whole has gone from strength to strength; the quality you can get for your money nowadays continues to astound us. Does Fender's latest Paramount dreadnought stand up in this contemporary context?

This 2022 mahogany model offers offset X-bracing for optimised resonance and looks more refined than before (read: higher end). Rather than natural mahogany stain for the top we have an Aged Cognac Burst, plus a matte black headstock. It wears it very well indeed, and once again Fender shows a keen eye for pizazz with the details. The 2017 models had a 1930s Weissenborn-style checked pattern around the body, back and soundhole, and the green, blue and red feather pattern here again looks back to the 1930s and 40s. Add in the snowflake inlays and it looks fantastic.

The guitar is a very tidy build and the aesthetic balances classy detail with the more rustic look mahogany builds can offer, alongside the comfort of a satin neck where you can still feel the grain. This makes a really strong first impression. It's lightweight for a solid, back and sides mahogany dreadnought at 1.7kg and the action here is relatively low for an acoustic and without any fretbuzz issues.

In our experience, mahogany acoustics tend to offer more midrange push in the tonal spectrum, and that's a great attribute to have in a mix with other instruments. If you're looking for deep bass boom and shimmery hi-fi trebles, they're not usually an obvious port of call and so it proves here; this is a quintessential mahogany dreadnought experience. It can take hard strumming and dexterous fingerpicking in its stride, with its mid and treble character clear and defined.

Like the Acoustasonic, the PD-220E finds Fender and Fishman joining forces on the pickup side of things for the undersaddle Sonitone Plus piezo pickup that can be blended with a body-sensing pickup for the top vibrations. You're limited to blend and volume controls just inside the soundhole, but comparing it to our own mahogany dread' with an original Sonitone system with our acoustic amp, it's a significant upgrade with less compression and represents the unplugged sound well.

With street prices of around $300 under the RRP, we're looking at one of the very best electro-acoustics available in this price range.

▶ VERDICT

The Paramount PD-220E is a standout guitar among the current electro-acoustics on the market.

▶ PROS

- Looks more higher end than its price.
- Beautiful mids and highs.

▶ CONS

- Not for those looking for big bass boom.

▶ CONTACT

FENDER AUSTRALIA
Ph: (02) 8198 1300
Web: fender.com/en-AU/

bartolini
Cort

PRICE: $1,149

Cort Artisan B5 Element

FIVE STRINGS AND CHARACTER. REVIEW BY **MIKE BROOKS**

The new B5 Element from Cort draws on the most popular features of the brand's Artisan range, adding into the mix a Bartolini electronics package, Hipshot and MetalCraft hardware and a roasted maple fingerboard. Given its affordable price, you get a lot of bang for your buck. Is the sum of the parts worthy of your attention? Let's find out.

The rounded body curves, deep lower cutaway and contouring to the rear of the body make this a very comfortable bass to wear, despite its 9.3-pound weight. Some noticeable headstock bias is solved when you play it on a strap. The five-piece walnut and panga panga laminate neck is connected to the body courtesy of a four-bolt attachment: the neck pocket appears solid and robust, however, there are two small gaps around the pocket where the neck doesn't sit completely flush against the body.

I found the rounded neck profile a little clubby, although the bulky feel is offset by the almost flat radius of the roasted maple fingerboard and as a whole, the neck feels substantial and well-finished, with no sharp fret ends. The warm shades of the neck and fingerboard timbers contrast markedly with the ash body top, but are very much in keeping with the mahogany core.

Black hardware reinforces the look of this instrument, with Hipshot Ultralite machine heads and a MetalCraft M5 bridge that facilitates both through-body and toploaded stringing. Abalone position markers adorn the front fingerboard facing, while white dots have been used along the side of the neck. The bass comes with a full Bartolini MK-1 package, comprising a pair of soapbar pickups: a three-band EQ circuit offers cut and boost across their respective frequencies, and there's also an active/passive selector.

From the moment you pick up the B5 Element, its forthright character is very apparent and no matter which playing style you wish to employ, a throaty midrange punch is noticeable. The bass has a pleasing 'bounce' in its core tone, and played acoustically, the B5 projects notes from every string, across the whole neck, with an energetic spring.

If you want the EQ to dampen down some of this natural liveliness, you'll be disappointed: the woody punch is with you from the moment you plug the bass in, particularly across the low-mid frequencies. Some players will be happy to hear this, of course, while others may not: it depends on how you want to put those lively tones to use. If you want an old-school rounded tone, pan across to the neck pickup, where the EQ will allow you to replace some of the punch with boosted bass frequencies; however, the gritty tone is still there. Slap, tap and pick players may find that this punchy quality helps to raise the signal over a band mix, giving the bass more character and projection.

Having said all that, this bass has plenty of tonal power on tap, and the extensive EQ gives the player an impressive palette of tones from which to choose. The bass EQ is robust and full, while the treble performance is clear, delivering a considerable amount of finesse to your signal. The midrange is where you need to focus your attention, and without a mid-sweep control to select a frequency to modulate, any boosting will accentuate the punchy qualities of this bass.

In terms of playability, the B5 Element is a pleasure to handle: Cort should be congratulated for taking the best qualities of their other basses and adding them to this model. The neck is very rewarding to play, aided by an 18mm string spacing and although the bass doesn't feature a 35" scale length, the low B string performs impressively alongside the other strings, giving a consistent tonal performance across the whole neck.

This is a solid performer in every respect, with a core tone that will work for a lot of players. At this price, there is very little to complain about.

▶ VERDICT

The B5 Element puts other, more expensive instruments to shame, so if you're looking for an affordable five-string, we recommend it.

▶ PROS

- Great specs and tones.
- Pocket-friendly price.

▶ CONS

- Midrange tones won't suit everyone.

▶ CONTACT

DYNAMIC MUSIC
Ph: (02) 9938 2072
Web: dynamicmusic.com.au

PRICE: CONTACT DEALER

Ernie Ball Music Man DarkRay

ERNIE BALL MUSIC MAN MEETS DARKGLASS ELECTRONICS IS THE BASS GEAR COLLABORATION WE'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR, AND IT IS SPECTACULAR. REVIEW BY **JOE DALY**

In the opening scene of the iconic 1985 film Back To The Future, a young Marty McFly – played by Michael J. Fox, like you didn't know that already – stands in front of a giant amplifier, strums a power chord, and is literally blown off his feet by the walloping sonic force. This scene springs to mind when we first plug in the new Ernie Ball Music Man DarkRay four-string bass guitar.

One of 2021's most talked-about releases, the DarkRay represents a visionary collaboration between Ernie Ball Music Man (EBMM) and the respected Finnish boutique equipment manufacturer Darkglass Electronics.

The result is a classic StingRay Special, enhanced with not one, but two distinct Darkglass drive circuits, wired into a proprietary two-band EQ preamp designed specifically for the DarkRay. Essentially, they've wired two separate Darkglass effects pedals – distortion and fuzz – directly into the bass. It's a fascinating proposition, and one that we were keen to put to the test. Here's what we learned...

Offered in both Obsidian Black and a limited edition Granite Stone, the DarkRay features a roasted maple neck with an 11" radius and 34" scale. The ebony fretboard stretches out across 22 high-profile frets. On the back, a combination of gunstock oil and hand-rubbed wax creates a hyper-smooth finish that allows for speedy navigation up and down the neck.

The DarkRay includes all of the enhancements of the StingRay's 2018 overhaul – the swamp ash body features enhanced contours and a five-bolt sculpted neck joint for surpassing stability.

There's also a vintage Music Man top-loaded, black-plated steel bridge, lightweight custom tuners with black matte finish and the iconic three-over-one headstock. Both Music Man and Darkglass logos appear on the neckplate to commemorate the model.

A single oversized neodymium humbucker pickup sits at the bridge position. Neodymium magnets carry one of the strongest magnetic charges – too strong for most guitars, but well-suited for basses – which allows them to generate roughly seven times the electrical impulse of ceramic magnets. In conjunction with the two-band active preamp, this gives the DarkRay fearsome potency.

On the front of the bass, beneath the pickup and bridge, sit five knobs and a three-position switch. The switch controls clean, Alpha (distortion) and Omega (fuzz) modes, the latter two named after the corresponding range of Darkglass effects pedals.

When Alpha or Omega mode is engaged, the LED ring around the gain knob changes color to red or blue, respectively; this light is subtle enough to avoid distraction while indicating the current mode.

In addition to the gain knob, a blend knob allows you to shape how much of the effect you want to mix into your clean signal, unleashing a boundless dynamic range. There are also knobs for volume, treble and bass.

An instrument can boast loads of glitzy technological wizardry, but if it's not an absolute joy to play, then it amounts to little more than a pricey – and loud – home furnishing. Thankfully, the DarkRay delivers all of the iconic comfort and playability of its EBMM predecessors. It sits easily on the lap and balances equally well with a strap.

The benefits of the neodymium pickup are immediately apparent; the DarkRay uncorks a commanding level of power. In clean mode, with bass and treble knobs set to midpoint, we conjure a smooth, room-filling tone, packed with prominent mids and an oceanic low-end.

Pushing the low and high frequencies creates a round and deeply satisfying thump, suitable for slapping. We could stay in clean mode all day and shape reams of meaty tones, for everything from jazz to blues to most styles of rock and heavy metal.

Setting the selector in Alpha (distortion) mode and pushing the gain gives our lines a ratty, Rage Against the Machine-style bite. Adding gain throws more dirt into the mix, and impressively, there's no low-end dilution. Moving into Omega (fuzz) mode, we start out with the gain relatively tame, coaxing a moderately-buzzed '60s garage rock vibe.

Nudging the gain progressively higher, the tone travels from space rock to shoegaze, maxing out into the doomy, fuzzed-out chaos of Electric Wizard. With every turn and toggle, the DarkRay unveils bold new vistas of tonal possibility, admirably highlighting its supreme versatility.

In lesser hands, an instrument wired with native effects could come across as gimmicky and impractical. After all, most serious tone junkies rely on pedals and amps for their rhythmic alchemy. However, the DarkRay is built with serious players in mind, and it boasts the reliability and playability that such musicians demand, even if they hardly use the onboard effects.

The reality is that once a player plugs in and experiments with these modes, they will find it nigh-on impossible to put this bass down.

▶ VERDICT

Addictively fun to play, rich with features, and built with superior quality, the DarkRay delivers a high return on its high pricetag, and will enjoy heavy rotation in any arsenal.

▶ PROS

- Limitless tone sculpting options.
- Ultra-sturdy.
- Perfectly balanced and playable.

▶ CONS

- Top end could use a boost.
- LED indicator may discourage some.

▶ CONTACT

CMC MUSIC
Ph: (02) 9905 2511
Web: cmcmusic.com.au

Phil Jones Bass X4 NanoBass Combo

HOW DOES A BASS AMP FEATURING NANOTECHNOLOGY SIZE UP? REVIEW BY **KEVIN JOHNSON**

Amp designer and mad scientist Phil Jones has built a reputation for getting a big sound out of small speakers, but there's usually more than one of them in his products. His latest creation is the multi-instrumental X4 Nanobass, which his company calls the most compact and portable combo he's ever designed.

The unit features a single four-inch driver in an enclosure that measures 6.3" by 7.9" by 7.8" and weighs just 2.4 kilograms. Billed as the perfect amp for your desktop or on the go, it has a headphone jack for silent and solitary practice and, crucially, two options for playback from external sources.

A 1/8" jack lets you manually plug in, while Bluetooth capabilities let you stream from the mobile device of your choice. An independent level knob allows for setting the output from either external source you choose. Last in its control set is a three-band EQ for tone shaping.

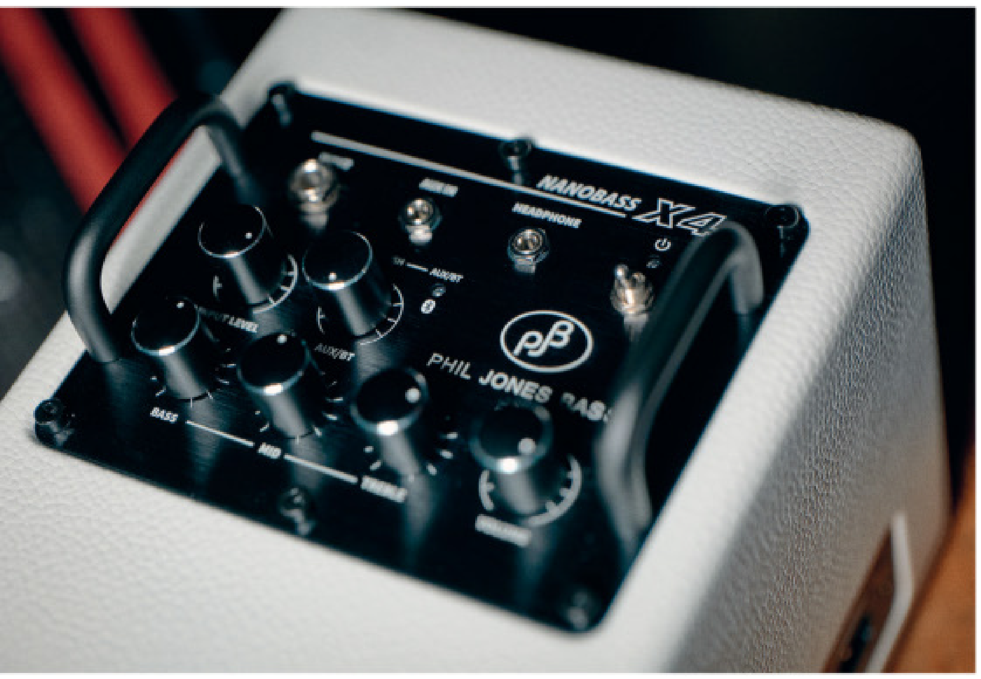
Even at its diminutive size, the X4 feels very sturdy. The AC input, which accepts worldwide voltage, is situated on the bottom right side of the amp, leaving the right-angled plug to stick out about one inch.

This must be a factor of fitting so much into a tiny space, but it does make it more awkward when sitting on a tight desk. All of the controls are very straightforward, and connecting to the Bluetooth is as simple as one push of the aux-in level knob.

As is evidenced in the owner's manual, Jones and his team of wizards have spent lots of time and resources to design the X4. I'm here to tell you that it worked. The sound is clean and clear, even articulating a low B-string very nicely. Its low end reflects your instrument's voice, but goosing the bass knob adds a surprising amount of heft and warmth.

At 35 watts, it won't compete with drums, but it certainly hangs with acoustic jams. Mostly I found myself using it as a quick tool to jam with music and drum apps. I may be greedy, but I would have liked to see it have a direct output, seeing as it sits right at your workstation.

Ultimately, the X4 is a convenient practice tool that sounds great, and having a great sound is a key to inspiration in your practice sessions. There's a price for convenience, though the final RRP in Australia has yet to be set (units are expected to drop in mid- to late August) but wherever the final price ends up it'll be an investment to have your tone in a combo you can bring anywhere.



▶ VERDICT

An amp the size of a shoebox shouldn't sound this good, but it does.

▶ PROS

- Fantastic tone.
- Tiny and convenient.

▶ CONS

- Awkward plug angle.

▶ CONTACT

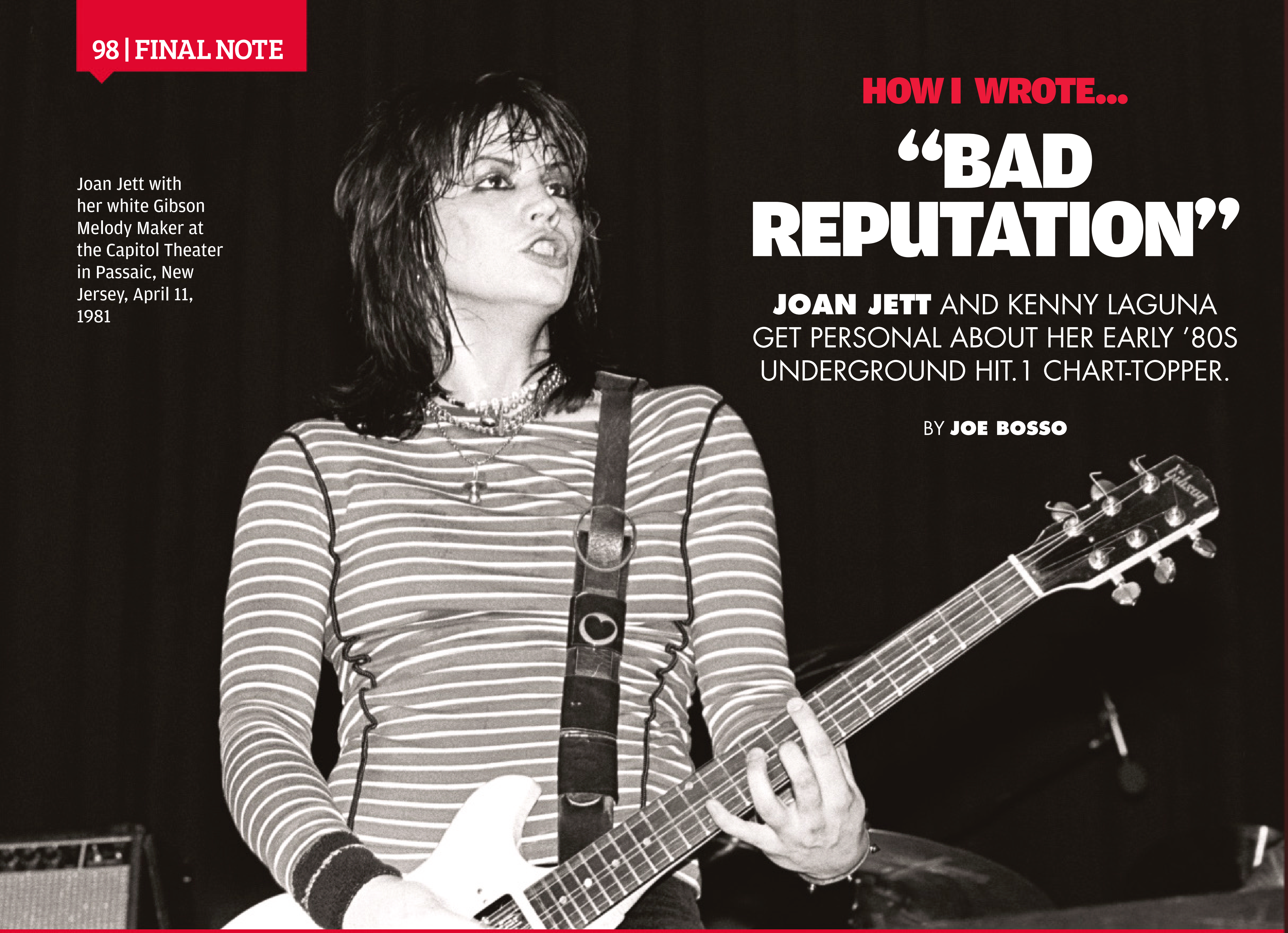
EGM DISTRIBUTION
Ph: (03) 9817 7422
Web: egm.net.au

HOW I WROTE...

"BAD REPUTATION"

JOAN JETT AND KENNY LAGUNA GET PERSONAL ABOUT HER EARLY '80S UNDERGROUND HIT.1 CHART-TOPPER.

BY **JOE BOSSO**



Joan Jett with her white Gibson Melody Maker at the Capitol Theater in Passaic, New Jersey, April 11, 1981

Ebet Roberts/Redferns/Getty Images

Joan Jett is unequivocal about "Bad Reputation," the rebellious pop-punk anthem that kicked off her post-Runaways career in 1980. "I love the song and am very proud of it," she says. "It's the basis for everything I do because it tells the truth. Too many people held this negative view of me because I played electric guitar. They said I was mean because of how I looked. I had this supposed 'bad reputation' because I was doing exactly what I wanted to do. It's what my parents told me I could do, and I believed them. I addressed it all in the song."

OWNING HER STORY

Following the breakup of the Runaways in 1979, Jett, along with her manager, Kenny Laguna, and producer Ritchie Cordell, set about recording her debut solo album on the cheap (and by calling in numerous favors) at the Who's Ramport Studios in London. Friends like the Sex Pistols' Steve Jones and Paul Cook assisted, along with members of the Roll-Ups: guitarist Lea Hart, bassist Jeff Peters and drummer Paul Simmons.

After recording on and off for a year, Cordell opined that the record was one song short. As it turned out, Jett had an ace up her sleeve. "There was this one riff that I had sitting around," she says. "It was a fast, straight-up Ramones kind of thing, and I thought it was pretty good. I had just come off from playing with the Ramones, so that kind of style was in my head – fast and hard."

At the same time, Jett talked to Laguna about her career and what she saw as misconceptions about her in the press. "The writers were always trying to make me out to be bad, or wrong – you know, not feminine," she recalls. "To them, I was 'the other,' whatever that is. I decided to embrace it, and Kenny and I set about codifying it in words."

A ONE-DAY WONDER

The song they worked up was tough enough to feel authentically punk, but filled with ear-candy pop smarts. "That's the combo you get with me and Kenny," Jett says. "With me alone, you wouldn't get that." Laguna says a key moment occurred when his friend Marty Joe Kupersmith (of Jay and the Americans fame) heard the line "I don't give a damn about my reputation." "He said, 'That's it! That's a song!'" Laguna says. With that encouragement, he and Jett finished the lyrics. (Kupersmith shares writing credit on the song with Jett, Laguna and Cordell.)

Finances were shot, and Jett had one day of studio time left. "We recorded the song lean and mean," she says. "It was pretty close to one take. I played all the guitar parts on my white Melody Maker. I think I went through an Ampeg amp, but it could have been a Music Man or a Vox. The sound was great. It was absolutely what we wanted."

SOUNDTRACK SENSATION

Jett felt as if "Bad Reputation" had all the makings of a hit. "It was catchy and something people could relate to," she says. "I loved it right off the bat." The song was the lead track on her eponymous debut album, released independently in 1980, but it failed to chart. It wasn't until a year later, when she formed the Blackhearts and was about to issue her breakthrough album, I Love Rock 'n Roll, that the song picked up steam. Her debut album was re-released by Boardwalk Records as Bad Reputation, and the song became a favorite with DJs across the country.

"Even so, it was never released as a single," Laguna says. "It became this underground hit. When iTunes came along, however, the song became a Gold download. It went wild." Over the years, "Bad Reputation" has been a staple in Jett's live shows, and it's become a go-to pick for film and TV music supervisors who have featured it in shows such as Freaks and Geeks and American Chopper, as well as the movies 10 Things I Hate About You and Shrek, among others. (It was even used this year in a self-deprecating ad for Folgers Coffee.)

Jett was particularly pleased in 2019 when Nike unveiled a spot featuring 10-year-old soccer phenom Makena Cook playing with her heroes in advance of the Women's World Cup, all to the soundtrack of "Bad Reputation." "That was a really great one," she says. "I think a lot of women and girls hear the song and say, 'Yeah... it's telling my story.'" "Bad Reputation" is featured on Changeup, the new all-acoustic album by Joan Jett & the Blackhearts.

Cort

G300 Pro

The G300 Pro is the new flagship model of the iconic G Series, a boutique-style guitar with modern enhancements that represents the best of what Cort can offer to meet the needs for superb playability, sonic versatility and aesthetic design.

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